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ABSTRACT

This guide is intended for use in training Head Start staff working with families to plan and implement the program's curriculum through an individualized child development and education approach. The guide focuses specifically on enhancing staff skills in carrying out the four steps in the individualizing process: screening; evaluation; planning; and ongoing assessment. Following an introductory section, the guide presents four training modules. Each module details expected outcomes, key concepts, background information, learning activities, and next steps. Handouts are included for each module. Module One, "Learning about Each Child--The First Step in Individualizing," provides an overview of the individualizing process. Module Two, "Creating Essential Partnerships--Families and Staff Working Together," allows participants to establish partnerships with families so they can share information about each child. Module Three, "Individualizing Every Day--An Ongoing Dynamic Process," encourages participants to respond to each child's unique characteristics by individualizing all aspects of the curriculum. Module four, "Responding to Children's Progress--The Ongoing Process Continues," builds participants' ability to conduct ongoing assessment. The final sections of the guide contain continuing professional development and resource lists. Five appendices address individualizing, culturally competent practices, screening instruments, characteristics of strong partnerships, and assessment in Head Start. (SD)

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HEAD START®

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community

Individualizing: A Plan for Success

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Head Start Bureau

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Individualizing:
A Plan for Success

Training Guides for the Head Start Learning Community

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Preface

Head Start: An Individualized Kind of Place

Conversation Overheard on the Bus

Foster grandparent: "Hello. Where are you two going?"

Worried-looking mother: "We're on our way to enroll in Head Start."

Foster grandparent: "Oh, you must be very excited."

Worried-looking mother: "Actually, I'm more worried than excited."

Foster grandparent: "What are you worried about?"

Worried-looking mother: "Where can I begin? This will be Haki's first time spending time away from me. Will they know what he likes to eat? Will they know how to help him fall asleep? Will they know that he likes to play with trucks? Will they see how special he is? Will they know that he's a little shy with new people? Will they know that he insists on putting his coat on by himself? Will they know how much I'm going to miss him?"

Foster grandparent: "No wonder you look so worried! You have a lot of information to share about your child, but I know everything will work out."

Worried-looking mother: "How do you know?"

Foster grandparent: "I'm a foster grandparent and I volunteer at the Head Start program. We will work hard to get to know you and Haki. We know we need your help to encourage Haki to grow and learn at Head Start."

Less-worried-looking mother: "I'm glad to hear that. I want him to try new things and play with other children."

Foster grandparent: "Well, Head Start's the place for you two. And, Haki, we have lots of trucks at Head Start. Oh, here's our stop. I'll show you where to go."

Smiling mother: "If everyone at Head Start is as nice as you, I know Haki will be in good hands!"

Haki: "Let's go, Mom. I want to see their trucks."

Preface

Individualizing is basic to the philosophy of Head Start. It is a key principle that guides all Head Start staff, regardless of their role in the program. Each grantee designs a program that reflects the community's needs, interests, and resources and the program is appropriate for the children and families enrolled. Head Start's approach to supporting families is based on an individualized family partnership agreement that describes a family's goals, responsibilities, timetables, and strategies for achieving these goals. Head Start staff are encouraged to pursue their own professional goals, and training is based on the results of individual needs assessments.

The *Head Start Program Performance Standards* require each Head Start program to have a curriculum—a written framework that is consistent with the Performance Standards and is based on sound child development principles about how children grow and learn. By definition, the curriculum should include:

- Goals for all children's development and learning
- Examples of the kinds of experiences through which children will achieve the goals
- Descriptions of what staff and families do to help children achieve the goals
- Examples of materials needed to implement the curriculum

The curriculum must promote children's development and learning in all domains. In addition, it should support Head Start principles and practices such as family involvement, health education, cultural and linguistic diversity, inclusion of children with disabilities, development in all domains, and individualizing.

Education staff and families use the curriculum as a guide for implementing an individualized child development and education approach in family child care, center, and/or home-based settings. After identifying each child's unique characteristics, they set goals and develop plans for offering experiences, interactions, and materials that will encourage the child's development and learning. As soon as a child is enrolled, staff and families begin sharing information about the child's:

- Abilities
- Family, culture, and home language
- Health status
- Likes and dislikes
- Needs

- Preferred learning styles
- Special interests, often based on life experience
- Strengths
- Temperament

Staff use this information to plan strategies that match each child's unique characteristics. They continue to individualize the strategies throughout the program year by sharing information about a child with the family, jointly reviewing progress, setting new goals, and planning ways to meet them.

Head Start believes that the most effective way to foster achievement of the curriculum's goals for development and learning is to respect, and respond to, the interests, skills, language, abilities, culture, and other characteristics of each child and family. Staff tailor the child development, education approach, and family partnership strategies to fit the children and families enrolled. The Head Start program design is flexible, and capable of adapting to individuals.

The benefits of an individualized approach are easy to see. Children get fully involved in activities, actively explore their environments, feel proud when they can do things for themselves, and enjoy playing and learning with others. Staff find their days go more smoothly and are excited to witness the children's progress. Families feel confident of their parenting abilities and positive about their children's potential. Individualizing gives each child the capacity to grow and learn now and in the future.

Introduction

Overview

Purpose

This technical guide is for enhancing the skills of education staff in working with Head Start families to plan and implement the program's curriculum through an individualized child development and education approach.

Individualizing: A Plan for Success examines the ongoing cycle of individualizing: screening, evaluation, planning, and ongoing assessment. The guide encourages staff to use a variety of strategies to get to know and plan for children, build partnerships with families, and assess children's progress.

In Head Start, staff and families use the program's written curriculum framework as a guide as they plan and implement an individualized child development and education approach. Staff and families respond to each child's unique characteristics and encourage all areas of development—cognitive, physical, social, and emotional. They create environments filled with interesting materials that reflect children's cultures and home languages and items that can be used in different ways. They plan activities that offer children choices and allow them to participate according to their individual interests and skill levels. Their interactions with children are tailored to match each child's need for support and guidance. They use routines to build relationships with individual children and as opportunities for children to develop and learn.

Individualizing is most successful when staff and families build strong partnerships and communicate frequently to share information about a child. Each partner brings a unique perspective to the relationship on the child's experiences, interests, culture, skills, strengths, abilities, and needs. By combining the information gained through the two perspectives, families and staff can use the curriculum to plan and implement an individualized child development and education approach.

Individualizing is an ongoing process that continues throughout a child and family's participation in Head Start. Staff and families document a child's activities and accomplishments and periodically formally review the child's progress. New goals are set and new strategies are developed so that the child benefits from an individualized approach at home and in Head Start settings.

Outcomes

After completing this guide, participants will be able to:

- Use multiple sources of information including parent reports, ongoing observations, and results of standardized (valid and reliable) screening and evaluation instruments to learn about each child's

strengths, needs, interests, abilities, culture, home language, and life experiences, and to set individual goals and develop plans for meeting the goals

- Develop a partnership with each family to share information about a child's culture, life experiences, skills, needs, interests, and abilities, and plan how to encourage growth and development at home and in Head Start settings
- Plan ways to address individual needs through all aspects of the curriculum—the environment, materials and equipment, schedule, activities, routines, and interactions
- Document children's progress using a variety of strategies, including observation, parent reports, and examples of children's work
- Collaborate with families to review children's progress, set new goals, and develop new plans that respond to children's progress and continue to promote development and learning

Audience

This is a technical guide for education staff in center, home, and combination settings, including classroom teams (teachers, assistants, and volunteers) and home visitors. It is also appropriate for family child care (FCC) providers.

Performance Standards

This guide supports the following child development and education concepts, which are based on the *Head Start Program Performance Standards:*

- Head Start staff/FCC providers, in conjunction with parents, use ongoing strategies such as periodic observations and recordings of children's developmental progress and emotional and behavioral patterns to identify new or recurring concerns so they can quickly make appropriate referrals.
- Head Start staff/FCC providers consult with parents when child health or developmental problems are suspected or identified and actively involve parents in developing and implementing follow-up plans.
- The child development and education approach for all children is developmentally and linguistically appropriate and responds to each child's individual rate of development, interests, temperaments, languages, cultural backgrounds, and learning styles.

- The child development and education approach supports inclusion of children with disabilities, as described on their Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).
- The child development and education approach supports and respects gender, culture, language, ethnicity, and family composition.
- The child development and education approach provides a balance of child-initiated and adult-directed activities, and individual and small group activities.
- The child development and education approach involves parents in curriculum development, ongoing observations of children, staff-parent conferences, and home visits.
- The curriculum is consistent with the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, is based on sound child development principles about how children grow and learn, and supports each child's social and emotional development, cognitive and language skills, and physical development.

Guide Overview

This technical guide, *Individualizing: A Plan for Success*, is designed to further develop the skills of the education staff and FCC providers in carrying out the four interrelated steps in *The Individualizing Cycle:*

(1) Screening—developmental, sensory, and behavioral (Refer to the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* for an in-depth discussion of screening.)

(2) Evaluation (diagnostic testing and/or examination for observable, known, or suspected health, developmental, sensory, and/or behavioral problems):

2-A: Multidisciplinary team meeting
2-B: Individualized program/plan

(3) Planning for Individual Children

(4) Ongoing Assessment

This guide focuses on how education staff/FCC providers can collaborate with families to carry out Steps 1, 3, and 4 for all children and describes how education staff, FCC providers, and families can participate in Step 2 for children with suspected and/or diagnosed disabilities.

Introduction

By completing the activities in this guide, participants will achieve the following guide outcomes:

- Be knowledgeable of and participate in, as appropriate, conducting screenings for all children using multiple sources of information
- Plan and use individualized strategies for communicating and building partnerships with families to share information, set goals, and plan ways to encourage a child's development and learning
- Create indoor and outdoor environments and offer materials and equipment that reflect children's cultures, home languages, skills, needs, interests, and abilities, and that encourage development and learning of all children, including those with disabilities
- Plan and implement activities that can be enjoyed by children at different skill levels and encourage children to make choices and participate in these activities in their own unique ways
- Tailor interactions with children to meet their needs for guidance, support, and encouragement
- Plan and implement routines appropriate to the skills and needs of individual children
- Implement an individualized ongoing assessment system to document each child's progress and changing characteristics and to share this information with families

Each module includes module outcomes, key concepts, and background information. The module outcomes were developed from the guide outcomes. *Individualizing: A Plan for Success* contains the following modules:

- **Module 1:** *Learning about Each Child—The First Step in Individualizing*

  This module provides an overview of the four steps in *The Individualizing Cycle* and enhances each participant's ability to use multiple sources of information to conduct a screening for each child.

- **Module 2:** *Creating Essential Partnerships—Families and Staff Working Together*

  This module allows participants to establish partnerships with families so they can share information about each child. They learn to use communication strategies tailored to meet a family's unique characteristics and circumstances.

- **Module 3:** *Individualizing Every Day—An Ongoing Dynamic Process*

  This module encourages participants to respond to each child's unique characteristics by individualizing all aspects of the curriculum—indoor and outdoor environments, materials and equipment, routines and transitions, schedule, and activities.

- **Module 4:** *Responding to Children's Progress—The Ongoing Process Continues*

  This module builds each participant's ability to conduct ongoing assessment, Step 4 in *The Individualizing Cycle*. Participants learn how to create, maintain, and use individual portfolios to document children's progress and changing characteristics. They also focus on how to plan, hold, and document conferences with families to discuss a child's progress, assess program effectiveness, set new goals, and plan strategies for achieving these goals.

Each module has specific outcomes for participants to achieve, and each activity is designed to fulfill one or more outcome. For easy reference, the outcomes are listed with the activity.

Each module includes a Key Concepts section, which summarizes the main ideas addressed in the workshop and coaching activities. The Background Information section of each module provides a more detailed discussion of the key concepts. Trainers and coaches can use this information to review the content covered in the module, present mini-lectures, or use the information as a resource for participants.

Each module closes with Next Steps, suggested activities for building on the skills developed through this guide. Some of the activities can be documented in a participant's professional portfolio, an ongoing collection of items that demonstrate an individual's professional growth and achievement.

Continuing Professional Development, a section that appears after the modules, includes suggested activities participants can undertake to sustain and enhance the skills they develop through this guide.

Introduction

A Resources section at the end of the guide describes books, journal articles, and audiovisual materials that offer in-depth information on the topics covered in this guide.

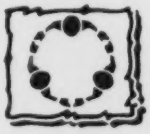
Trainers and coaches can review the entire series of Head Start staff training guides to determine which of the guides may be used in conjunction with this one. *Individualizing: A Plan for Success* focuses on a child's health as well as a wide range of other characteristics that make each child a unique individual. You can also use several of the modules and activities in *Curriculum: A Blueprint for Action*, *Observing and Recording: Tools for Decision Making*, *Engaging Parents*, *Setting the Stage: Including Children with Disabilities in Head Start*, *Translating the IEP into Classroom Practice*, and *Promoting Mental Health* to help you prepare for or deliver training to others on the topics addressed in this guide. See the Resources section for information on ordering these Head Start publications.

Definition of Icons

Coaching

A training strategy that fosters the development of skills through tailored instruction, demonstrations, practice, and feedback. The activities are written for a coach to work closely with one to three participants.

Workshop



A facilitated group training strategy that fosters the development of skills through activities that build on learning through group interaction. These activities are written for up to twenty-five participants working in small or large groups with one or two trainers.

Next Steps: Ideas to Extend Practice

Activities assigned by the trainer immediately following the completion of the module to help participants review key information, practice skills, and examine their progress toward expected outcomes of the module.

A *portfolio* is a living document of one's professional growth and achievement. The material that is developed and added to the individual's collection is an important tool for self-evaluation and demonstrates to others one's professional growth. The Next Steps sections of this guide will suggest activities that contribute to this unique staff development tool.

Continuing Professional Development

Follow-up activities for the program to support continued staff development in the regular use of the skills addressed in a particular training guide. They include:

(1) Opportunities tailored to the participant to continue building on the skills learned in the training

(2) Ways to identify new skills and knowledge needed to expand or complement these skills through opportunities in areas such as higher education, credentialing, or community educational programs

Introduction

At A Glance

Module	Activity	Time	Materials
Module 1: Learning about Each Child—The First Step in Individualizing	(W) Activity 1-1: The Individualizing Cycle	90 minutes	*Handout 1: The What? Why? How? and What's Next? of Individualizing* *Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle* *Appendix A: The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing* *Appendix B: Ensuring Culturally Competent Practices* Chart paper, markers, tape Index cards or Post-Its (optional)
	(C) Activity 1-2: Why Do You Do What You Do?	90 minutes	*Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle* *Handout 3: Why Do We Do What We Do?* *Appendix A: The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing* *Appendix B: Ensuring Culturally Competent Practices* Chart paper, markers, tape Index cards or Post-Its (optional)
	(W) Activity 1-3: Learning about Each Unique Individual	120 minutes	*Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle* *Handout 4: Using Multiple Sources of Information* *Handout 5: Introducing a Unique Head Start Child and Family* *Handout 6: Filling in the Blanks* *Appendix C: Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument* Chart paper, markers, tape

Module	Activity	Time	Materials
Module 1: Learning about Each Child—The First Step in Individualizing (Continued)	(C) Activity 1-4: Getting to Know All about You	120 minutes	*Handout 7: Introducing . . .* *Appendix C: Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument* Chart paper, markers, tape
Module 2: Creating Essential Partnerships—Families and Staff Working Together	(W) Activity 2-1: Building on Each Family's Strengths	150 minutes	*Handout 8: Two Heads Are Always Better Than One* *Handout 9: Building on a Family's Strengths* *Handout 10: Action Plan* Chart paper, markers, tape
	(C) Activity 2-2: Building Strong Partnerships	150 minutes	*Handout 11: Building a Strong Partnership* *Appendix D: Characteristics of Strong Partnerships* Chart paper, markers, tape
	(W) Activity 2-3: Looking and Learning from Both Sides	120 minutes	*Handout 12: Sharing Information about Each Child* *Handout 13: Using Shared Information* Chart paper, markers, tape
	(W) Activity 2-4: Keeping Up-to-Date	120 minutes	*Handout 14: Putting Information to Use* *Handout 15: Reaching Out to Share Information* Chart paper, markers, tape

Introduction

Module	Activity	Time	Materials
Module 3: Individualizing Every Day—An Ongoing Dynamic Process	(W) Activity 3-1: Individualizing Every Day, in Every Way	90 minutes	Chart paper, markers, tape **Option A:** VCR, monitor, videotape *Individualizing in Head Start* **Option B:** *Handout 16: Individualizing Every Day*
	(C) Activity 3-2: Daily Approaches to Individualizing	90 minutes	Chart paper, markers, tape **Option A:** VCR, monitor, and videotape *Individualizing in Head Start* *Handout 17: Strategies for Individualizing* **Options A and B:** *Handout 18: Individualizing Journal*
	(W) Activity 3-3: Something for Everyone	120 minutes	*Handout 19: Individualizing for Bernard* Assortment of art materials Chart paper, markers, tape
	(C) Activity 3-4: Can You Make It Fit?	120 minutes	*Handout 20: Is This Individualizing?* *Handout 21: Is This Individualizing?*—Possible Responses *Handout 22: Two Unique Individuals* *Handout 23: Making the Environment Fit*

Module	Activity	Time	Materials
Module 4: Responding to Children's Progress—The Ongoing Process Continues	(W) Activity 4–1: Every Portfolio Tells a Story	150 minutes	*Handout 24: Creating a Portfolio* *Appendix E: Ongoing Assessment in Head Start* A child's portfolio Chart paper, markers, tape
	(C) Activity 4–2: Putting the Pieces Together	150 minutes	*Handout 25: Getting to Know All about You* *Appendix E: Ongoing Assessment in Head Start* A child's portfolio Chart paper, markers, tape
	(W) Activity 4–3: Making Conferences Work for Everyone	90 minutes	*Handout 26: What's Right? What's Wrong?* *Handout 27: Conference Checklist*
	(C) Activity 4–4: Using Conferences to Support Individualizing	150 minutes	*Handout 27: Conference Checklist*

(C) Coaching Activities

(W) Workshop Activities

Module 1

Learning about Each Child—The First Step in Individualizing

In this module participants learn why individualizing is important, review skills used to carry out the four steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*, and use multiple sources of information to get to know each child.

Outcomes

As a result of completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Use ongoing observation, planning, communication, and evaluation skills to carry out the four steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*
- Use a combination of formal and informal strategies and tools to identify the unique characteristics of individual children in collaboration with families, Head Start staff, and consultants
- Share screening results with families and Head Start staff, with the family's permission, and refer a child for an evaluation when indicated
- Set goals for individual children in collaboration with families and Head Start staff, based on screening results

Key Concepts

- Individualizing allows families and education staff/FCC providers to respond to each child's built-in time clock for development, as well as to his or her culture, family, home language, life experiences, strengths, needs, skills, and abilities.
- Head Start encourages families to participate in all steps of *The Individualizing Cycle*.
- Head Start ensures that every enrolled child has an up-to-date examination of his or her medical, dental, mental health, and speech and hearing so that problems can be detected early and treated promptly.
- Head Start staff/FCC providers use multiple sources of information to conduct a developmental, sensory, and behavioral screening for each child.

Background Information

Theories and principles of child development describe how children grow and learn. Developmental milestone charts predict the approximate ages at which children develop specific cognitive, physical, social, and emotional skills and abilities. Child development theories, principles, and milestones describe, in general, how young children develop. However, to encourage a child's development, we also need to know what makes

that child unique. Recognizing each child's unique characteristics and planning a curriculum that responds to these differences is called *individualizing*.

What Makes Each Child Unique?

Children develop at different rates. They gain skills and learn new concepts according to individual time clocks. For example, some babies walk before they are a year old, while others need a few more months to develop this physical skill. Many other characteristics make children unique. They grow up in the context of family and culture, both of which contribute to their individuality. Children vary in temperament—the inborn characteristics that affect their responses to people, events, and environments. Some children are affected by disabilities, health conditions, or high levels of stress. Other factors that help define the individual child include:

- Home language
- Special interests, often based on life experiences
- Strengths
- Needs
- Likes and dislikes
- Preferred learning styles

Children's unique characteristics are often interrelated and one characteristic may influence another one. For example, a child with strong language skills is likely to take the lead in dramatic play activities.

Why Do We Individualize?

Comprehensive, high-quality early childhood programs such as Head Start have found that individualizing is the most effective way to foster young children's healthy growth and development. Individualizing allows staff/FCC providers and families to plan a curriculum—schedule, environment, materials, interactions, routines, and activities—that encourages children to use the skills they already have and challenges them to develop new ones. Through an individualized curriculum, children can experience success and growth rather than failure and frustration.

The Individualizing Cycle

By completing each step in *The Individualizing Cycle*, Head Start staff/FCC providers and families can encourage the development and learning of each child. As you read the following description of *The Individualizing Cycle*, you can also refer to *Appendix A: The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing*.

1: Screening

Step 1 in *The Individualizing Cycle* is screening—getting to know each child. Staff learn about each child's health and developmental history, culture, family, home language, skills, needs, strengths, abilities, temperament, preferred learning style, and likes and dislikes. This information becomes the basis for an individualized child development and education approach.

Head Start requires that all children receive health examinations and screenings of their developmental, sensory, and behavioral status. Health examinations are medical, dental, and mental health examinations that are always conducted by licensed health professionals such as physicians, medical practitioners, or dentists. Health screenings may be done by health professionals or other trained individuals. (Refer to the *Head Start Program Performance Standards* for an in-depth discussion of screening.)

Education staff rely on multiple sources of information to conduct a screening for each child. These sources include reports from families of their children's health; developmental, sensory, and behavioral history; and their skills, interests, strengths, and needs. Other sources include home visits, staff and consultant observations of children, samples of children's work, and the results of a standardized developmental screening instrument. A standardized screening instrument is one that has been determined to be reliable and valid as a result of a rigorous test development phase.

Typically, education staff, with the family's permission, administer a developmental screening instrument. Appropriate developmental screening instruments for preschool children are:

- Child-centered: focus on individual skills
- Multidimensional: measure social, emotional, cognitive, and physical growth
- Activity-centered: require children to perform tasks that can be observed
- Reliable and valid

Reliability refers to how consistently or frequently the administration of the same testing instrument produces identical results. Validity refers to the accuracy of the test results. When choosing an instrument, it is critical to review the information provided by the developer and/or publisher regarding the instrument's reliability and validity. If the instrument was not proven reliable and valid, it should not be used. (See *Appendix C: Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument* for more information on this topic.)

Head Start programs should be aware that it is nearly impossible to find a developmental screening instrument that is completely nonbiased and appropriate for all children, regardless of home language and culture. When a program serves children from differing cultures and home languages, it may be necessary to adapt the screening instrument and procedures to collect accurate information. Some programs use cultural and language mediators or interpreters to communicate with children, families, and staff during the screening process.

Staff share screening results with families using culturally sensitive and respectful terms. Staff also share screening results with staff and specialists from all of the disciplines represented on the Head Start team.

2: Evaluation

Step 2 of *The Individualizing Cycle*, evaluation, applies only to children whose screening results indicate a possible problem. In such cases, education staff seek a family's permission to refer their child to a specialist who can conduct an in-depth examination of the child's health, developmental, sensory, and/or behavioral status. Health evaluations are conducted by health professionals, and lead to diagnosis and treatment. Developmental, sensory, and/or behavioral evaluations are conducted by specialists in collaboration with local agencies under the provision of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). IDEA provides funding for local early intervention programs serving infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families and Local Education Agencies (LEAs) serving preschoolers and older children.

As when administering a standardized developmental screening instrument, programs should be aware of the effects of language and cultural differences during use of an evaluation instrument. Specialists who administer instruments and interpret the results should be culturally competent. This means that they understand the culture and language of a referred child and family and can apply this knowledge during the evaluation process. When needed, programs can also use culture and language mediators or interpreters as described earlier.

2-A: Multidisciplinary Team Meeting and 2-B: Develop and Implement IFSP/IEP

In Steps 2-A and 2-B, the multidisciplinary team meeting, Head Start staff/FCC providers, the child's family, the disabilities services coordinator, early intervention program/LEA representatives, and other consultants meet to review the evaluation results. Sensitivity to a family's culture and language is crucial to the success of this meeting. The multidisciplinary team determines whether the child meets the Head Start and/or the early intervention program/LEA eligibility criteria for special education services and usually makes one of the following decisions:

- **The child does not meet Head Start or early intervention/LEA eligibility criteria for special education services.** Head Start staff and the child's family plan an individualized approach based on screening and evaluation results.

- **The child meets Head Start and early intervention program/LEA eligibility criteria for special education services.** Using input from Head Start staff and the child's family, the designated agency develops a comprehensive Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) for children from birth to age three or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for children ages three and up. The IFSP includes plans for providing services to the infant or toddler and his or her family. The IFSP or IEP outlines both the child's needs and strengths. The special education service requirements of the child, as designated in the IFSP or IEP, are provided under the supervision of the disabilities services coordinator in collaboration with the early intervention program/LEA and other service agencies. For these children, the early intervention program/LEA's agreement to the individualized plan indicates their commitment to ensure that the child receives needed services.

- **The child meets Head Start eligibility criteria for special education services; however, the early intervention program/LEA does not recognize the child as having a disability.** Head Start eligibility criteria were developed to be compatible with eligibility criteria used by early intervention programs/LEAs, so this outcome is the exception. Staff and families plan an individualized program based on screening and evaluation results, and Head Start assumes primary responsibility for ensuring that the child receives needed services. If Head Start believes that a child was denied services due to an inappropriate decision by the multidisciplinary team, the program staff should help families understand and exercise their rights to request further evaluations of their child's needs.

3: Planning for Individual Children

Step 3 in *The Individualizing Cycle* is planning for individual children. Planning begins as soon as a child is enrolled. Throughout the year, the staff/FCC providers and family use the information gained through screening, evaluation if applicable, and ongoing assessment (see below) to set goals for the child and plan a child development and education approach that responds to and builds on the child's culture, home language, and other unique characteristics. The plan might include strategies related to aspects of the curriculum such as the schedule, environment, materials and equipment, activities and routines, and interactions. The plan should be adjusted frequently in response to up-to-date information collected through ongoing assessment.

For some children, the planning process also includes developing strategies for responding to health-related needs. For example, when a child is diagnosed with food allergies or a chronic illness such as asthma, education staff/FCC providers, the health coordinator, and the child's parents should agree on and put in writing the strategies that will be used to ensure the child's health and participation in program activities. (See the Head Start training guide *Well Child Health Care* for further information.)

4: Ongoing Assessment

Children are growing and changing all the time. They may develop new interests, be affected by life experiences or changing family circumstances, or respond positively to treatment for an identified health condition. Step 4 in *The Individualizing Cycle*, ongoing assessment, allows staff/FCC providers and families to track a child's progress and keep up with changing characteristics. Observations, checklists, communications with families, anecdotes shared by consultants, and samples of children's work are among the sources used for ongoing assessment. This information can be maintained in an individual portfolio—a living record of a child's progress as he or she participates in and learns from Head Start experiences. (See Module 4 for information on how to use an individual portfolio for a child.)

Staff/FCC providers and the child's family meet periodically to review the contents of the child's portfolio and assess progress. They then use this information to set new goals and plan strategies for continuing to encourage the child's development. For example, a parent and home visitor have both noticed a toddler using small motor skills with greater competence. They respond by providing a small pitcher so the child can pour her own drinks, offering a variety of manipulatives such as large wooden beads and strings, and encouraging the toddler to dress herself.

Ongoing assessment might lead staff and parents to identify signs of a health and/or developmental problem. When this occurs, a child should be referred for evaluation (see Step 2 of *The Individualizing Cycle* as described above).

A Dynamic Process

The Individualizing Cycle is a dynamic process. The steps in the cycle are repeated throughout a child's Head Start experiences. Staff/FCC providers and families are always learning more about each child, reviewing progress, setting new goals, and planning new individualized approaches for encouraging development and learning.

Trainer/Coach Preparation Notes:

In the Head Start community and in the medical and early childhood fields, the terms used to describe the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle* may differ from those used in this guide. The terms in this guide are defined as follows:

Screening is the process of using multiple sources of information to learn about a child's individual characteristics and developmental, sensory, and behavioral history and status.

Evaluation is the diagnostic testing and/or examination of a child for observable, known, or suspected health, developmental, sensory, and/or behavioral problems.

Ongoing assessment is the use of multiple sources of information to track a child's progress and to keep up with his or her changing characteristics.

To ensure that participants gain a clear understanding of the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*, use terms that are familiar to them.

Activity 1–1: The Individualizing Cycle

Purpose: In this activity, participants define individualizing, review the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*, and examine how the steps contribute to an individualized child development and education approach.

Outcome:

Participants define and follow the four steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Index cards or Post-Its (optional for Step 6)
Handout 1: The What? Why? How? and What's Next? of Individualizing
Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle
Appendix A: The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing
Appendix B: Ensuring Culturally Competent Practices

1. Explain to participants that this activity is an overview of the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*. If further workshops are planned, explain that the next one will focus on the first two steps in the

process—screening and evaluation. Subsequent modules will address developing partnerships with families, planning and implementing an individualized program, and conducting ongoing assessment.

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
>
> Your role in this activity is to help participants clarify what they already know about individualizing. As Head Start staff/FCC providers, they probably are familiar with individualizing and already get to know each child and plan an individualized program. However, they may not view these steps as interrelated pieces of *The Individualizing Cycle*.

2. Ask participants to work in pairs to define individualizing for children in Head Start. Give participants 5 minutes to complete this assignment. Invite volunteers to record their definitions on chart paper. Post the definitions.

3. Discuss the definitions with the group. Help participants reach a consensus on a single definition that includes two key elements: (1) getting to know what makes each child unique and (2) using information about each child in program planning. Refer to the following example:

   Individualizing is the ongoing process of recognizing each child's characteristics and planning a curriculum that responds to these differences.

   Next, make the following points:

   - **Getting to know each child:** In Head Start, we get to know children by using multiple sources of information during screening and, when indicated, evaluation of a child's health, developmental, sensory, and/or behavioral status. As children participate in Head Start, we continue learning about them through ongoing assessment, which also relies on multiple sources of information.

   - **Planning the curriculum:** In Head Start, we plan and implement an individualized curriculum using information about each child. We use information collected during ongoing assessment to plan and implement new ways to respond to a child's changing skills, needs, interests, and other characteristics.

4. Ask participants to divide into four small groups. Distribute *Handout 1: The What? Why? How? and What's Next? of Individualizing*. Assign a different step to each group. Review the instructions on the handout, stressing that participants can complete the activity using what they already know about the assigned step. Give participants 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

5. Beginning with Step 1 on the handout, have the groups describe their assigned steps. Then distribute *Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle* so that participants can see how one step leads to the next.

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
>
> During discussion of the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*, participants may raise questions about the roles of staff/FCC providers and families, recommended strategies, handling special situations, and so on. You can respond by either addressing the questions at the time or tabling them for discussion during subsequent modules in this guide. Participants can save their questions on index cards, Post-Its, or chart paper.

6. As you lead a summary discussion, make the following points about *The Individualizing Cycle:*

   - All children enrolled in Head Start receive screenings and health examinations.
   - In general, medical, dental, and mental health examinations are conducted by licensed health professionals, health screenings are conducted by health professionals or other trained persons, and screenings (developmental, sensory, and behavioral) are conducted by education staff.
   - Families must give permission for their children's screening, health examinations, and evaluations. Family involvement is encouraged in all steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*.
   - Head Start programs should respect the cultures and home languages of all children and families by using culturally competent practices throughout *The Individualizing Cycle*.

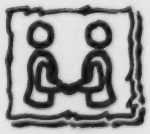
- Step 2 applies only to children with observable, known, or suspected health, developmental, sensory, and/or behavioral problems. It includes 2–A: a multidisciplinary team meeting and may include 2–B: the development and implementation of individualized plans. A child could be referred to Step 2 at enrollment, after screening, or whenever a problem is observed, known, or suspected.

- Steps 3 and 4 apply to all children enrolled in Head Start. Staff and families develop and implement individualized plans and conduct ongoing assessment throughout a child's Head Start experiences.

- *The Individualizing Cycle* is dynamic and ongoing. It responds as children gain new skills, develop new interests, and experience changing life circumstances.

7. Distribute *Appendix A: The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing* and *Appendix B: Ensuring Culturally Competent Practices*. Explain that these are references that participants can use with the charts they completed during this activity.

Activity 1–2: Why Do You Do What You Do?



Purpose: In this activity, participants define individualizing, review the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*, and examine how these steps contribute to an individualized child development and education approach.

Outcome:

Participants define and follow the four steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Index cards or Post-Its (optional for Step 3)
Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle
Handout 3: Why Do We Do What We Do?
Appendix A: The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing
Appendix B: Ensuring Culturally Competent Practices

1. Explain to participants that this activity provides an overview of individualizing and is a review of the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*. If additional coaching activities are planned, explain that the next one will focus on the first two steps in the process—screening and evaluation. Subsequent modules will address developing partnerships with families, planning and implementing an individualized program, and conducting ongoing assessment.

Coach Preparation Notes:

During discussion of the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*, participants may raise questions about the roles of staff and families, recommended strategies, handling special situations, and so on. You can respond by either addressing the questions now or tabling them for discussion during subsequent modules in this guide. Participants can save their questions on index cards, Post-Its, or chart paper.

2. Ask participants to think of something they did in response to a child on a typical day in Head Start. For example, how did they respond to a child who was acting in the following way:

   - Asking for attention (through crying, talking, or other behavior)
   - Playing with toys or using materials
   - Exploring the outdoors
   - Solving a problem
   - Playing alone, with another child, or in a small group
   - Separating from or reuniting with a family member
   - Reading a book
   - Eating or drinking during a feeding or mealtime

   When participants have a specific incident in mind, ask the following questions:

   What was the setting of this incident?

   What did the child do?

   What did you do?

   What did you know about the child and/or family that led to your specific response?

   How did you know this about the child and/or family?

   Handout 3: Why Do We Do What We Do? includes two examples you can use to demonstrate this process.

3. Discuss the following definition of individualizing and how it applies to the incidents described by participants:

Individualizing is the ongoing process of recognizing each child's unique characteristics and planning a curriculum that responds to these differences.

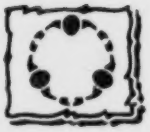
Use participants' responses to point out that they individualize the program by: (1) getting to know what makes each child unique, and (2) using information about each child in program planning.

4. Distribute *Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle*. Use the handout and the Background Information in this module to review the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle* and how they are interrelated.

5. Ask participants to describe how they demonstrate respect for cultural and language diversity as they carry out each step in *The Individualizing Cycle*. Distribute *Appendix B: Ensuring Culturally Competent Practices* for use as a reference.

6. Distribute *Appendix A: The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing*. Explain that this on-the-job reference summarizes *The Individualizing Cycle*.

Activity 1–3: Learning about Each Unique Individual



Purpose: In this activity, participants learn to use multiple sources of information, including standardized developmental screening instruments, to get to know each child.

Outcomes:

Participants use a combination of formal and informal strategies and tools to identify the unique characteristics of individual children in collaboration with families, Head Start staff, and consultants.

Participants share screening results with families and Head Start staff and, with a family's permission, refer a child for an evaluation, when indicated.

Participants set goals for individual children in collaboration with families and Head Start staff, based on screening results.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle
Handout 4: Using Multiple Sources of Information
Handout 5: Introducing a Unique Head Start Child and Family
Handout 6: Filling in the Blanks
The program's Developmental Screening Instrument
Appendix C: Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument

1. Explain to participants that this activity will review Head Start's screening and evaluation process and focus on the importance of using multiple sources of information to get to know what makes each child a unique individual.

2. Ask participants to tell you everything they know about the program's screening and evaluation process. Have a volunteer record this information on chart paper. If needed, you can use the following questions as prompts:

Screening

What is screening?
When does it take place?
Which children are screened?
What is the purpose of screening?
Who conducts the screening?
What instruments and strategies are used during screening?
How are children prepared?
How are families involved?
How do staff show respect for cultural and language diversity?
How are screening results used?

Evaluation

What is evaluation?

When does it take place?

How does the program ask families for permission to refer a child for evaluation?

Which children are referred for an evaluation?

What is the purpose of evaluation?

Who conducts the evaluation?

What instruments and strategies are used during evaluation?

How are children prepared?

How are families involved?

How do staff/FCC providers show respect for cultural and language diversity?

What happens after the evaluation?

Who participates in the multidisciplinary team meeting?

Which children receive IFSPs or IEPs?

How are IFSPs or IEPs implemented and monitored?

Trainer Preparation Notes:

Tailor your review of Head Start's screening and evaluation process to the training needs of the participants. Spend as much or as little time as is needed to make sure participants have a broad understanding of the process.

3. Distribute *Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle.* Use the information offered by participants, the Background Information for this module, and the diagram on the handout to give a brief overview of Head Start's approach to screening and evaluation.

4. Ask participants to form four small groups. Have each group spend 10 minutes generating a list of the sources of information members use to get to know children and families. The lists are likely to include:

   - Observation notes
   - Anecdotal records
   - Health records
   - Staff/FCC provider meetings
   - Results of developmental screening instruments
   - Checklists
   - Conversations with families
   - Home visits
   - Results of evaluation instruments
   - Reports from consultants

5. Have participants share their sources of information in round-robin style. The first group shares a source from its list, the second group shares another source, and so on. The groups continue to share without repeating a source until they run out of items.

6. Distribute *Appendix C: Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument* and the developmental screening instrument used by the program. Use the checklist in the Appendix to discuss why the

instrument was selected and how it is used. If appropriate, discuss how the instrument and its administration procedures are adapted to respect cultural and language diversity.

7. Ask the groups to take turns selecting sources of information from their master list until all are assigned. Distribute and review the instructions for *Handout 4: Using Multiple Sources of Information.* Give participants 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

8. Ask each group to share what they learned. Lead a summary discussion, stressing the following key points:

   - The same information can be collected from different sources.
   - By the time we administer a formal screening instrument, we already know a lot about each child and family.
   - Families are critical sources of information about a child's health and developmental history, culture, home language, experiences, interests, skills, needs, strengths, abilities, likes and dislikes, and, of course, relationships with other family members.
   - Using multiple sources of information leads to a complete picture of a child and family.

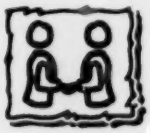
9. Have participants remain in their small groups. Distribute and review the instructions for *Handout 5: Introducing a Unique Head Start Child and Family*. Give participants 20 minutes to complete this assignment. When the descriptions are finished, have each group trade with another one.

10. Distribute and review the instructions for *Handout 6: Filling in the Blanks*. Give participants 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

11. Ask the groups that exchanged profiles of information to meet with each other and share what they recorded on *Handout 6: Filling in the Blanks*. Have the paired groups give each other feedback on whether they identified the missing information or additional gaps. Allow 20 minutes for the entire process.

12. Close the session by reinforcing the importance of involving families in Head Start's screening and evaluation process. Ask participants to share with a partner one new strategy that they plan to use to enhance family participation in this process.

Activity 1–4: Getting to Know All about You



Purpose: In this activity, participants define the characteristics that make each child a unique individual and learn to use multiple sources of information to get to know each child.

Outcomes:

Participants use a combination of formal and informal strategies and tools to identify the unique characteristics of individual children in collaboration with families, Head Start staff, and consultants.

Participants share screening results with families and Head Start staff and, with a family's permission, refer a child for an evaluation, when indicated.

Participants set goals for individual children, in collaboration with families and Head Start staff, based on screening results.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Handout 7: Introducing . . .
Appendix C: Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument

1. Explain to participants that this activity focuses on defining the characteristics that make each child a unique individual and using multiple sources of information to build a complete picture of each child.

2. Ask participants to assume the role of a family member and list everything they would want Head Start to know about their child. (As an alternative, ask participants to take on a child's perspective and list the things they would want Head Start to know about them.)

3. Next, have participants return to the perspective of a Head Start staff member. Ask them to work with you to list information about each child and family that will help them include families in planning and implementing an individualized program. For example, they might want to know the following information:

   Did the child attend another child development program? If so, what activities did he or she enjoy?

   How does the child respond to new situations and people?

   What self-help skills does the child use regularly?

   What are the child's and family's cultural beliefs and practices?

What is the child's home language? Does the child have skills in more than one language?

What is the child's typical schedule for eating and sleeping?

What social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills has the child mastered? Which ones are being developed?

Who are the adults and children who live with the child? How does the child relate to these people?

What can the child do really well?

Ask participants to compare this list of questions with the list of what a family or child might want Head Start to know (Step 2 of this activity). Are the lists similar or different? Are there items on the family or child list that they would like to add to the Head Start list?

4. Record on chart paper the following categories typically used to describe a child's unique characteristics. Leave space under each one.

Culture	Family
Home language	Life experiences
Skills	Needs
Strengths	Abilities
Interests	Temperament (inborn traits)
Learning style	Likes and dislikes
Health status	Developmental status

Ask participants if they want to add other categories. Record them on the chart paper. Have participants group the items listed in Steps 2 and 3 of this activity into these categories.

Allow participants a few minutes to review their work. Ask participants, *If you knew this information about a child and family, would it help you offer an individualized child development program?* Explain that they have identified the information about a child that is typically collected through Head Start's screening and evaluation process.

5. Discuss the following sources of information used during Head Start's screening and evaluation process. As you review each source, ask participants to match it with one or more items on the list developed in Step 4. Examples are in parentheses.

- Observation notes (self-help skills the child uses in routines)
- Anecdotal records (how the child plays with others)
- Health records (whether the child has any food allergies)
- Staff meetings (materials the child can use)
- Developmental screening results (cognitive skills)
- Checklists (small motor development)
- Conversations with families (how the child handles frustration)
- Home visits (the child's interests)
- Reports from cultural and language mediators or interpreters (how culture and language affect screening and assessment)
- Evaluation results (preferred learning style)
- Reports from consultants (developmental strengths and needs)

Distribute *Appendix C: Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument* and the developmental screening instrument used by the program. Use the checklist in the Appendix to discuss why the instrument was selected and how it is used.

6. Ask participants to use the information in the file of a child enrolled in Head Start to complete *Handout 7: Introducing. . . .* Remind them to maintain confidentiality.

7. Meet with participants to discuss the completed *Handout 7: Introducing . . .* and to review the program's screening and evaluation process as follows:

   Does the screening and evaluation process use multiple sources of information to build a picture of the whole child?

   How does the process respect cultural and language diversity?

   Are families involved throughout the process?

Does the process provide the information needed to individualize the curriculum?

What changes, if any, would make the process more effective?

What role can participants play in planning and implementing the changes?

Next Steps: Ideas to Extend Practice

Participants can build on skills developed through this guide by completing the following activities, independently or with other staff/FCC providers. Some of these activities can contribute to the participants' professional portfolios. (See page 5 for a description of a professional portfolio.)

Write an Article or Letter on Screening and Evaluation

Using simple language and an eye-catching format, write an article or letter addressed to families that explains the following aspects of the screening and evaluation process used in your Head Start program:

- What?
- Why?
- When?
- How?
- Where?
- Who?

Possible Portfolio Entry: Completed article or letter

Learn about Early Intervention and/or LEA Programs

Meet with the staff and/or consultants who oversee services to children with disabilities to review and discuss your Head Start program's interagency agreement with the early intervention program and/or the LEA. At this meeting, find out about the program's approach to including children with diagnosed disabilities. Make sure you understand the process for referring Head Start children for evaluation and the collaborative approach for providing services to children and families.

For example:

How do children and families transition from Early Head Start to Head Start?

What is the system for transferring children's records, in addition to requiring parental permission?

How do Head Start staff responsible for education, health, disabilities, and family support communicate with their counterparts in the schools?

Are there joint meetings of all relevant parties to share knowledge of individual children's skills and needs?

Are there joint training sessions for representatives from Early Head Start, Head Start, and/or other agencies?

Share what you have learned with other education staff/FCC providers.

Possible Portfolio Entry: Summary of findings

Review Developmental Screening Instruments

In conjunction with the staff and/or consultants who oversee services to children with disabilities, order review copies of the developmental screening instruments administered to children of the ages served by your program. Appendix C includes a list of screening instruments.

Use the checklist in Appendix C to compare and contrast these instruments to the one used by your program. Share your findings with parents and other staff. Consider using a new instrument if it seems more appropriate than the one you are currently using. Your program could try using the different instruments to discover whether they provide useful information about the skills and abilities of individual children.

Possible Portfolio Entry: Summary of findings

Establish an Ongoing Cultural Competence Training Program

Work with the director and staff representatives to plan an ongoing training program related to cultural competence. You can use the information in Appendix B as a starting point. Training should provide both knowledge about the cultures and languages of families enrolled in the program and opportunities to develop and practice skills in applying this knowledge. Look for ways to adapt program practices to make them more culturally and linguistically sensitive. Invite parents to serve as planners, trainers, and participants.

Possible Portfolio Entry: Training design, handouts, and/or evaluations

Handout 1: The What? Why? How? and What's Next? of Individualizing

Instructions: Discuss the step in *The Individualizing Cycle* assigned to your group.* Use this form to record your answers to the following questions: **What** is this step? **Why** is it important? **How** do you respect cultural and language diversity? **What's Next** after this step is completed? Choose someone from your group to explain your responses to the full group. You will have 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

Step	What?	Why?	How?	What's Next?
1. Screening				
2. Evaluation				

*The terms used on this handout may differ from those used by your program. If necessary, ask your trainer to clarify each step.

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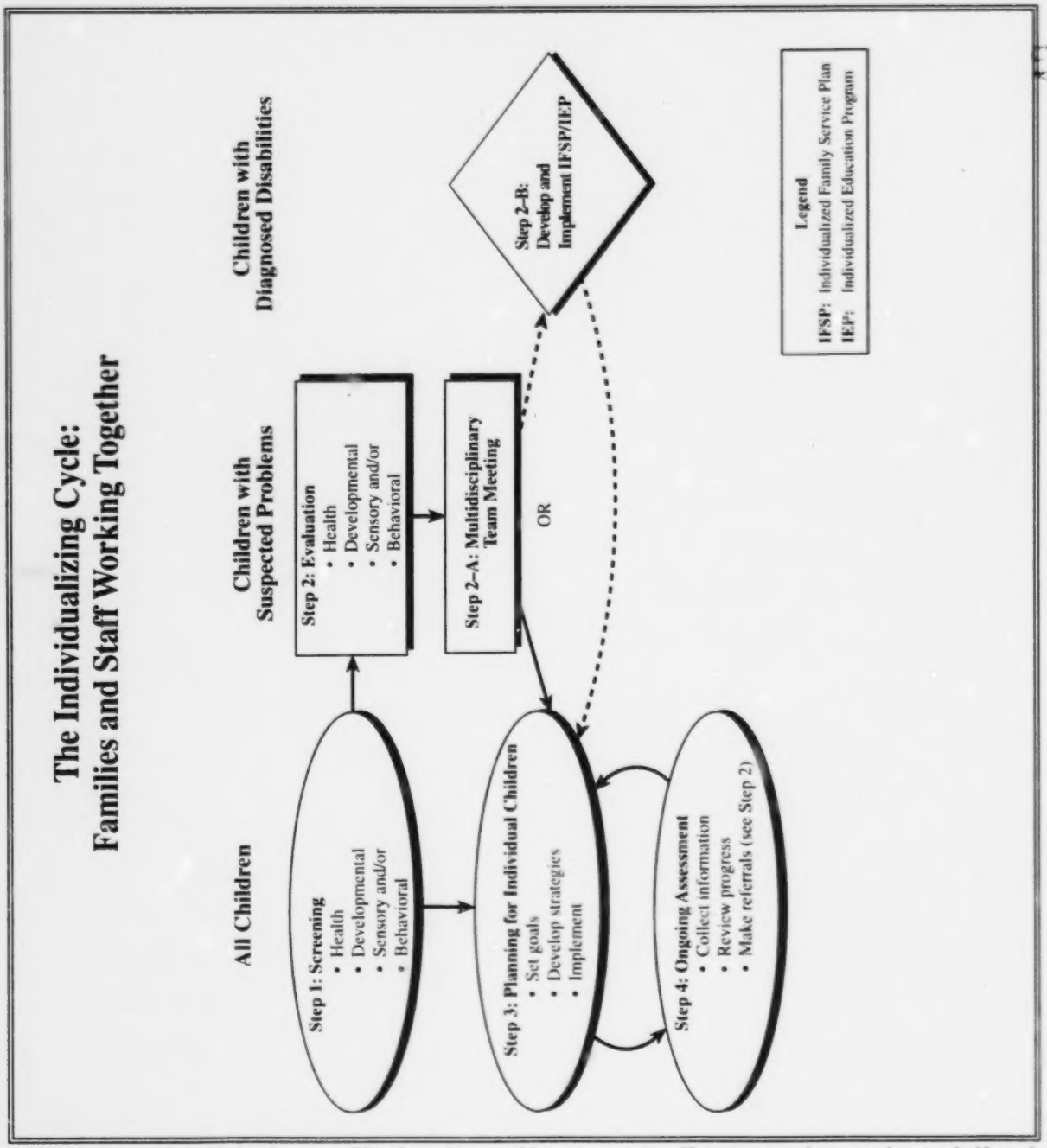
Note: Use with Activity 1-1

Handout 1: The What? Why? How? and What's Next? of Individualizing (Continued)

Step	What?	Why?	How?	What's Next?
3. Planning for Individual Children				
4. Ongoing Assessment				

Handout 2: The Individualizing Cycle



*The terms used on this handout may differ from those used by your program. If necessary, ask your trainer to clarify each step.

Note: Use with Activities 1–1, 1–2, and 1–3

Handout 3: Why Do We Do What We Do?

Example #1: Mrs. R. Helps Luis Get Used to His Baby Brother

What was the setting of this incident?

The incident took place during a home visit to the R. family. I was talking to Mrs. R. about what the nurse practitioner had said during her baby's two-month check-up.

What did the child do?

Luis tried to push his baby brother out of his mother's lap.

What did you do?

I stopped talking and watched while Mrs. R. responded to Luis. She redirected him to another activity—building with milk carton blocks.

What did you know about the child and family that led to your specific response?

I knew Luis had been the youngest member of his family for three years before the birth of his baby brother and that he had mixed feelings about being a big brother.

I knew Mrs. R. would let Luis know she understood and accepted his feelings, but she would not let him hurt the baby.

How did you know this about the child and family?

Luis and Mrs. R. have been enrolled in Head Start for several months. During our initial visit, Mrs. R. told me that Luis seemed unhappy about the new baby coming. She said she heard him tell neighbors and relatives that the new baby was going to stay at the hospital.

Before the baby was born, Mrs. R. asked what she could do to help Luis get used to sharing her attention with the new baby. We anticipated the kinds of problems that might come up and discussed strategies she could use to help Luis feel like he was still an important part of the family, even if he was no longer the youngest child.

During last week's home visit, I observed Mrs. R.'s response when Luis exhibited similar behaviors. When Luis left the room, we discussed how he was doing. She said that Luis was getting used to the baby and was gentle and caring toward him more often than when she and the baby first came home from the hospital.

Note: Use with Activity 1-2

Handout 3: Why Do We Do What We Do? (Continued)

Example #2: Charlene Masters Separation

What was the setting of this incident?

The incident took place during arrival time on a Monday morning.

What did the child do?

Charlene came to the door of the classroom, holding on tightly to her father's hand. Tears rolled down her face. Her father said, *I think we might need some help this morning.*

What did you do?

I took Charlene's free hand as her father helped her let go of his. I bent down to Charlene's level and whispered, *Your daddy loves you very much. He's going to work while you stay here and play at Head Start.* She said good-bye through her tears. As her father left, I said, *Would you like to look at one of the new books in the library area?*

What did you know about the child and family that led to your specific response?

Charlene spends every other weekend with her father.
Charlene misses her father in between their visits.
Charlene can handle her sad feelings as soon as she becomes involved in something.
Charlene's father understands and respects his daughter's feelings.
Charlene loves books.

How did you know this about the child and family?

Charlene's mother had let us know when she and Charlene's father started living apart. She reminds us when Charlene will be spending the weekend with her father.

I've observed Charlene painting several pictures of her family. Sometimes she put her mother over to one side of the picture, and sometimes she put her father over to one side.

The last few times that Charlene arrived in tears, we observed how she handled her feelings. We noted that she got involved in an interesting activity more quickly when an adult intervened. We discussed our observations with her father and planned the strategy that I used today.

Charlene's mother and father have both told us that Charlene loves books, and we have observed her reading in the library corner and eagerly participating during story time.

Handout 4: Using Multiple Sources of Information

Instructions: Use this form to summarize your discussions about using different sources of information to get to know a child and family. You will have 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

Source of Information:

How can you use this source to get to know a child and family?

What might you learn about a child and family by using this source?

Source of Information:

How can you use this source to get to know a child and family?

What might you learn about a child and family by using this source?

Note: Use with Activity 1–3

Handout 4: Using Multiple Sources of Information (Continued)

Source of Information:

How can you use this source to get to know a child and family?

What might you learn about a child and family by using this source?

Source of Information:

How can you use this source to get to know a child and family?

What might you learn about a child and family by using this source?

Handout 4: Using Multiple Sources of Information (Continued)

Source of Information:

How can you use this source to get to know a child and family?

What might you learn about a child and family by using this source?

Source of Information:

How can you use this source to get to know a child and family?

What might you learn about a child and family by using this source?

Handout 5: Introducing a Unique Head Start Child and Family

Instructions: Use this form to describe some unique characteristics of an imaginary Head Start child and family. Leave some vital information out of your description. When you are finished, trade your completed description for that of another group. You will have 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

Child and Family	Unique Characteristics
Culture and Home Language	
Family *(siblings, household members, goals for the child's development, goals for the family's development)*	
Life Experiences	
Skills	
Strengths	
Abilities	

Note: Use with Activity 1–3

Handout 5: Introducing a Unique Head Start Child and Family (Continued)

Child and Family	Unique Characteristics
Needs	
Interests	
Temperament	
Learning Style	
Likes and Dislikes	
Health Status *(medical, dental, nutritional, mental)*	
Developmental Status *(motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, sensory, behavioral skills)*	
Reminder: Did you leave out some key information?	

Handout 6: Filling in the Blanks

Instructions: Read and discuss the description of a unique Head Start child and family that was given to your group. Identify the information that is missing from the description of a Head Start child and family. Refer to the categories on *Handout 5: Introducing a Unique Head Start Child and Family*, if needed. You will have 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

What additional information would it be helpful to know?	Why do you need this information to individualize?	What sources can you use to obtain the missing information?
Example: *The family's goals for their child's development*	Example: *I could use it to work with the family to set goals and plan strategies for encouraging development at home and at the center.*	Example: *I could ask the family during a home visit or schedule a meeting to share what we know about the child and to plan an individualized program.*

Note: Use with Activity 1–3

Handout 6: Filling in the Blanks (Continued)

What additional information would it be helpful to know?	Why do you need this information to individualize?	What sources can you use to obtain the missing information?

Handout 7: Introducing . . .

Instructions: Use information in the file of a child in the Head Start program to complete the following summary of the child's unique characteristics. **Be sure to maintain confidentiality.** List the sources used during the screening and, if applicable, evaluation to get to know the child and family.

Child and Family	Unique Characteristics	Sources of Information
Culture and Home Language		
Family *(siblings, household members, goals for the child's development, goals for the family's development)*		
Life Experiences		
Skills		
Strengths		
Abilities		

Note: Use with Activity 1-4

Handout 7: Introducing . . .
(Continued)

Child and Family	Unique Characteristics	Sources of Information
Needs		
Interests		
Temperament		
Learning Style		
Likes and Dislikes		
Health Status *(medical, dental, nutritional, mental)*		
Developmental Status *(motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, sensory, behavioral skills)*		

Creating Essential Partnerships—Families and Staff Working Together

In this module, participants will gain an understanding of the family's role in child development and how important it is to include the family in any plans for the child. Participants will also learn strategies to help them build positive relationships with families.

Outcomes

As a result of completing this module, participants will be able to:

- Build strong partnerships with individual families based on mutual respect and trust and the understanding that working together encourages the child's development
- Plan and implement individualized strategies for encouraging ongoing communication between staff and families to share information about each child's health status, culture, home language, skills, needs, strengths, interests, and past and current experiences at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and/or during group socialization sessions
- Collaborate with parents to use shared information while encouraging a child's development at home and in Head Start settings

Key Concepts

- Families are truly their children's primary educators. They have known their children since birth and will have lifelong relationships with them.
- Families and Head Start staff have different perspectives about a child. Combining their information creates a more complete picture of the child's health status, culture, home language, interests, skills, needs, abilities, likes and dislikes, personality, temperament, and how the child's development is influenced by his or her family and culture.
- Head Start staff take the lead in creating and maintaining systems that encourage ongoing communication with families.
- Head Start staff use an individualized approach to sharing information with families by offering a variety of communication strategies that respond to each family's unique characteristics.

Background Information

A partnership is a cooperative relationship among two or more people that is based on shared goals, rights, and responsibilities. Partnerships are most successful when the partners respect and trust each other. This means that partners have confidence in each other and realize that working together is beneficial to all. When Head Start families and staff

develop strong partnerships based on mutual trust and respect, there are benefits for families, staff, and children, such as:

- **Family members** learn more about their children and consequently strengthen their parenting skills. Feelings of competence may lead them to set and pursue new goals for personal, educational, and professional growth.

- **Staff** also learn more about the children. They feel more competent because sharing information and strategies with families helps staff respond to each child as an individual.

- **Children** feel more secure knowing that both their families and Head Start staff can keep them safe and help them learn at home and in Head Start settings. They are proud of their family's involvement.

Families and Staff Working Together

Families play an essential role in an individualized child development program when they work in partnership with staff in each step of *The Individualizing Cycle*. To help staff get to know their child, family members share information about the child's health and developmental history; likes and dislikes; special interests; home language; culture, family values, and traditions; and relationships with other family members. Each family also works with staff to implement the program's curriculum by setting goals and planning individualized strategies for encouraging the child's growth and development. As staff and the family use these strategies at home, at the center, and/or during group socialization sessions, they collect information about the child's activities. During home visits and conferences, staff and the family share this information and review the child's progress. They set new goals and plan new individualized strategies tailored to respond to the child's changing characteristics.

Individualized Partnerships

Just as children have unique characteristics, so do Head Start families. They represent great diversity in culture, language, composition, traditions, and past and current life experiences. Because of these differences, the strategies that staff use to build a partnership with one family may be inappropriate for another. For example, staff may have frequent contacts with a teenage parent and her mother who live together, participate in home visits, and attend group socialization sessions. Sharing information with this family is likely to be a natural, ongoing occurrence. On the other hand, staff may have few opportunities for face-to-face communication with a single mother who attends a full-time employment training program and is raising her child alone. To build a partnership with this mother, staff could write brief notes or make regular phone calls. Staff might arrange to meet with her in the evening or at other times when she is not in training to let her know that her input is valued even though she is unable to volunteer in the classroom.

When staff cannot communicate in a family's home language, extra attention is needed to make sure written and verbal messages are understood. Although it may be difficult when numerous languages are represented in a program, every effort should be made to offer written materials in the languages of enrolled families. When needed, the program should seek the assistance of an interpreter who understands a family's language and culture.

Respecting Each Family's Culture

Strong partnerships between Head Start staff and families are culturally responsive. As outlined in the *Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs* and incorporated throughout the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*, all families have a culture that defines their approach to the world. Culture may also determine beliefs about education, guidance, play, and learning and can govern the way people interact.

Staff need to learn from families and other credible sources which communication and interaction practices are typical of a family's culture. For example, in many cultures, sitting three feet away from parents during home visits is an ideal distance for having a personal, but not intrusive, conversation. Other cultures may consider this too close or too distant. Other elements of interactions such as eye contact, tone of voice, and response times to questions are also influenced by cultural values. To illustrate, in many cultures it is appropriate to answer a question as soon as it is asked. However, in some Native American and Asian cultures, it is more respectful to reflect on a question and consider what one wants to say before replying.

Culture also influences the planning of an individualized program. The family's attitudes toward play, academic skills, discipline, and food may be rooted in culture. When staff understand the cultural basis for a family's beliefs, they can respect the family's point of view and more effectively plan with them for the child's Head Start experiences.

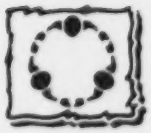
In some cultures, the teacher is seen as someone who always knows best. Respect for Head Start staff may be so great that some families may feel uncomfortable when the program encourages their active involvement. It may take time to develop a partnership with these families. However, over time, most families recognize their important role. They realize that Head Start staff know a lot about working with young children, but that there is still more to learn, particularly about *their* child. Eventually, they will understand that developing and maintaining a partnership with staff enhances their child's progress.

Communication and Information-Sharing Strategies

To reach out and involve a family, staff need to identify individual strengths and barriers that could support or hinder communication. Then staff select communication and information-sharing strategies that match each family's unique characteristics.

Partnerships between Head Start staff and families do not just happen. They evolve as staff and families get to know and understand each other. The process of building each partnership begins when a child and family enroll in Head Start. It continues as staff use individualized strategies to communicate with families and share information about the child's interests, skills, and experiences that may influence development. An important part of every Head Start staff member's job is to take the lead in establishing and maintaining partnerships with families; however, over time, as the partnership gets stronger, families are likely to become more active partners.

Activity 2–1: Building on Each Family's Strengths



Purpose: In this activity, participants learn how to build strong, individualized partnerships with families.

Outcomes:

Participants build strong partnerships with individual families based on mutual respect and trust and the understanding that working together encourages the child's development.

Participants plan and implement individualized strategies for encouraging ongoing communication between staff and families to share information about each child's health status, culture, home language, skills, needs, strengths, interests, and past and current experiences at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and/or during group socialization sessions.

Participants collaborate with parents to use shared information while encouraging a child's development at home and in Head Start settings.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Handout 8: Two Heads Are Always Better Than One
Handout 9: Building on a Family's Strengths
Handout 10: Action Plan

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on the elements of strong partnerships and how to build strong partnerships based on each family's unique strengths.

2. Ask participants to choose one or more partners (depending on group size). Distribute *Handout 8: Two Heads Are Always Better Than One* and review the instructions. Give participants 30 minutes to complete this assignment.

3. Ask a few volunteers to present their plans for working together to complete the selected task. List the following characteristics of strong partnerships on chart paper:

   - Members choose to belong
   - Members respect each other
   - Members are honest
   - Members trust each other
   - Each member makes unique contributions
   - Members have shared goals
   - Members divide responsibilities
   - Everyone benefits from the partnership

   As you review each characteristic, ask *How does it apply to the partnerships you just formed? How does it apply to the partnerships you build with families?*

4. Have participants form small groups. Distribute *Handout 9: Building on a Family's Strengths*. Give participants 30 minutes to complete this assignment.

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
>
> In the next step, participants act as facilitators. This gives them a greater role in their training and helps them recognize the knowledge and life experiences they bring to the workshop.

5. Reconvene as a large group. Ask the small groups to take turns facilitating the discussion about responses to the questions.

6. Have participants form pairs. Distribute *Handout 10: Action Plan*. Give participants 20 minutes to complete their plans.

Trainer Preparation Notes:

Some barriers to building strong partnerships with families are not easily overcome. Education staff can work with other members of the Head Start team to discuss and develop strategies for building partnerships with families who are affected by extreme and often overwhelming sources of stress such as chronic illness, extreme poverty, homelessness, or drug or alcohol abuse.

If participants have such families in their programs, allow sufficient time to discuss strategies for involving families without asking them to take on additional responsibilities that could cause further distress.

7. Ask several volunteers to share and receive feedback on their Action Plans. Be sure to cover all of the steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*. Ask discussion questions such as the following:

   How can you tailor your approach to match the strengths and other characteristics, including differing languages and cultures, of individual families?

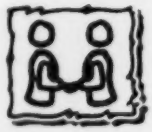
   What barriers to building strong partnerships are typical of the families and staff in your program?

   What can Head Start do to overcome these barriers?

   How can you follow up with families to let them know how the information they have shared is being used to offer an individualized program for their child?

8. Close by asking participants to share their Action Plans with other Head Start staff and to involve them in implementing some of the proposed changes.

Activity 2–2: Building Strong Partnerships



Purpose: In this activity, participants learn to use an individualized approach to building strong partnerships with families.

Outcomes:

Participants build strong partnerships with individual families based on mutual respect and trust and the understanding that working together encourages the child's development.

Participants plan and implement individualized strategies for encouraging ongoing communication between staff and families to share information about each child's health status, culture, home language, skills, needs, strengths, interests, and past and current experiences at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and/or during group socialization sessions.

Participants collaborate with parents to use shared information while encouraging a child's development at home and in Head Start settings.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Handout 11: Building a Strong Partnership
Appendix D: Characteristics of Strong Partnerships

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on the characteristics of strong partnerships and on individualizing communication and information-sharing strategies to match a family's characteristics.

2. Ask participants to brainstorm a list of partnerships, including famous ones. Here are some examples to get you started:

   - Business (Sears and Roebuck)
   - Family (my grandmother and grandfather)
   - Entertainment (Barnum and Bailey)
   - Cartoons (Mickey and Minnie)
   - Government (President and Vice President)
   - Public servants (police officers who share a patrol car)

3. Now ask, *What do these successful partnerships have in common?* List the responses on chart paper. For example, in successful partnerships, the members usually:

   - Choose to belong
   - Respect each other
   - Are honest

- Trust each other
- Make unique contributions
- Have shared goals
- Divide responsibilities
- Benefit from the partnership

4. Ask participants, *Which of these common characteristics apply to your partnerships with families?* Have participants describe incidents from their experiences that illustrate the characteristic. Distribute and discuss *Appendix D: Characteristics of Strong Partnerships*. Participants can use Appendix D as a reference.

5. Distribute and review *Handout 11: Building a Strong Partnership*. Have participants complete this assignment before the next coaching session.

6. Meet with participants to discuss their completed handouts. Reinforce the following key points:

   - Each family has unique characteristics that need to be considered when planning ways to build a partnership.
   - Strategies that work with one family may not be effective with another.
   - Staff should use a culturally competent approach to building partnerships.

Coach Preparation Notes:

Some barriers to building strong partnerships with families are not easily overcome. Education staff can work with other members of the Head Start team to discuss and develop strategies for building partnerships with families who are affected by extreme and often overwhelming sources of stress such as chronic illness, extreme poverty, homelessness, or drug or alcohol abuse.

If participants have such families in their programs, allow sufficient time to discuss strategies for involving families without asking them to take on additional responsibilities that could cause further distress.

7. Have participants use what they learned in this activity to build a strong partnership with a specific family. Discuss, without naming the family, the family's characteristics, culture and home language, potential barriers to the partnership, and ways to overcome them. Have participants plan individualized strategies for communicating and sharing information with the family. Ask participants to implement their plans over the next month.

8. Meet with participants to discuss what happened when they implemented their plans. Focus on how the improved partnership benefits the family, the child, and the participant. Encourage participants to use what they learned to improve their partnerships with all families.

Activity 2–3: Looking and Learning from Both Sides

Purpose: In this activity, participants learn how to use information shared by families to encourage a child's development at home and in Head Start settings.

Outcomes:

Participants build strong partnerships with individual families based on mutual respect and trust and the understanding that working together encourages the child's development.

Participants plan and implement individualized strategies for encouraging ongoing communication between staff and families to share information about each child's health status, culture, home language, skills, needs, strengths, interests, and past and current experiences at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and/or during group socialization sessions.

Participants collaborate with parents to use shared information while encouraging a child's development at home and in Head Start settings.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Handout 12: Sharing Information about Each Child
Handout 13: Using Shared Information

Trainer Preparation Notes:

Copy each of the charts from *Handout 12: Sharing Information about Each Child* onto a piece of chart paper. You can use the examples on the handout or make up your own. Post the chart labeled *Information Head Start Can Share with Families* at one side of the room and the chart labeled *Information Families Can Share with Head Start* at the other.

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on the kinds of information families and Head Start can share and developing strategies for using the information to individualize a child development program.

2. Have participants form four small groups. Distribute *Handout 12: Sharing Information about Each Child* and review the instructions and examples. Assign two groups to complete the first chart, *Information Head Start Can Share with Families*, and two groups to complete the second chart, *Information Families Can Share with Head Start*. Give participants 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

3. Ask the two groups who worked on the first chart to alternate sharing their general categories and specific examples until all are listed. Have a volunteer record the responses on the appropriate chart. Ask the other two groups if they have additional entries for the chart. When everyone thinks the list is complete, use the same procedure to record categories and examples on the second chart.

4. Discuss the differences and similarities between the items on the two charts by asking questions such as the following:

   What do families know about their children that Head Start staff ***might not*** *know?* For example:

   - Health history
   - Relationships with family members
   - Cultural practices
   - What the child likes to do at home
   - What the child is afraid of

   What do Head Start staff know about children that families ***might not*** *know?* For example:

- Favorite play materials
- Roles the child takes during dramatic play
- Use of English language skills
- Effectiveness of strategies listed on a child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Why is it important for staff and families to share information about each child? For example:

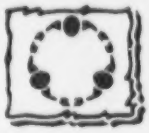
- Families are the primary influence on a child's development before, during, and after participation in Head Start.
- Families can help staff plan a program that reflects and supports their cultural values and practices.
- Staff and families each see the child in a different setting.
- Staff and families each have knowledge of the child's skills in English and the home language.
- Sharing both perspectives creates a picture of the *whole* child.
- Children are changing all the time, so staff and families need up-to-date information to individualize.
- Both staff and families can encourage a child's development.

5. Have the groups trade charts and perspectives. The two groups that worked on the family chart now focus on the Head Start chart and vice versa. Distribute *Handout 13: Using Shared Information* and review the instructions and examples. Give participants 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

6. Ask each group to present their strategies for using the shared information. Other participants can add their suggestions to expand on the ones that each group offers.

7. Close by having participants think of a family with whom they have difficulty sharing information. Ask participants to make a commitment to identify and overcome barriers to sharing information with this family.

Activity 2–4: Keeping Up-to-Date



Purpose: In this activity, participants learn how to use information shared through partnerships with families to encourage the child's development at home and in Head Start settings.

Outcomes:

Participants build strong partnerships with individual families based on mutual respect and trust and the understanding that working together encourages the child's development.

Participants plan and implement individualized strategies for encouraging ongoing communication between staff and families to share information about each child's health status, culture, home language, skills, needs, strengths, interests, and past and current experiences at home, at an FCC home, at the center, and/or during group socialization sessions.

Participants collaborate with parents to use shared information while encouraging a child's development at home and in Head Start settings.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Handout 14: Putting Information to Use
Handout 15: Reaching Out to Share Information

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on sharing information with families and developing strategies for improving their communications with families.

2. Distribute *Handout 14: Putting Information to Use* and review the instructions and examples for Part I. Give participants 20 minutes to complete their charts.

3. Discuss each participant's completed chart.

4. Review the instructions and examples for Part II of *Handout 14: Putting Information to Use*. Give participants 20 minutes to complete Part II.

5. Discuss the completed handouts, making the following points:

   - Families are the primary influence on a child's development before, during, and after participation in Head Start.

   - Families can help staff plan a program that reflects and supports their cultural values and practices.

- Staff and families each see the child in a different setting.
- Staff and families each have knowledge of the child's skills in English and the home language.
- Sharing both perspectives creates a picture of the *whole* child.
- Children are changing all the time, so staff and families need up-to-date information to individualize.
- Both staff and families can encourage a child's development.

6. Distribute *Handout 15: Reaching Out to Share Information*. Review the instructions and the examples. Have participants complete this assignment before the next coaching session.

7. Meet with participants to discuss their experiences in reaching out to a specific family. Ask the following questions:

   What information did the family share about their child that Head Start staff might not have known?

   What information did the participants share about the child that the family might not have known?

   How can families and staff use the shared information to individualize at home and in Head Start settings?

   How did making an extra effort to communicate benefit the child? family? participant?

8. Encourage participants to repeat this activity to improve their approach to communicating and sharing information with Head Start families.

Next Steps: Ideas to Extend Practice

Participants can build on the skills developed through this guide by completing the following activities, independently or with other staff. Some of these activities can contribute to the participants' professional portfolios. (See page 5 for a description of a professional portfolio.)

Learn a Second Language

Does your Head Start program enroll families whose home language is not English? If so, work with your community college or adult education department to offer a series of classes to help staff learn some key phrases in the language that will help them communicate and respond to children and families. Invite families to participate and assist the teacher with correct pronunciation and word usage.

Possible Portfolio Entry: List of key phrases in home languages used by families in the program

Develop Communication Strategies

Sometimes families who have a child with a disability feel they are unable to meet their child's needs and are left out of decisions made by professionals. They may not realize what an important role they play. Work with others on the Head Start team to plan or revise your system for maintaining ongoing communication with families and everyone else involved in implementing and reviewing children's IFSPs and IEPs.

Possible Portfolio Entry: List of effective communication strategies

Conduct a Workshop on the Role of Parents

Use Activity 2–2 of this module to plan and implement a series of workshops for families on the important role they play in an individualized child development program.

Possible Portfolio Entry: Outline and handouts for the workshops

Become a Culturally Competent Practitioner

It can be overwhelming to try to become an expert on every culture represented in Head Start. It is more important to be a cultural learner. Ask families to help you and other staff learn about their culture's norms, expectations, practices, and values. Record this information in a format that is accessible to all staff.

Possible Portfolio Entry: A videotape or audiotape of conversations with families or a series of brief articles, illustrated with photographs, about the cultures represented in the program

Handout 8: Two Heads Are Always Better Than One

Instructions: With your partner(s), select a task from the following list and plan a way to do it together. If you prefer, you can make up your own task. Use the questions below to guide your planning. You will have 30 minutes to complete this assignment

- Bait a hook
- Braid hair
- Change a flat tire
- Read a book to a small group of children
- Plan a field trip
- Plant a garden
- Host a party
- Mow the lawn
- Reorganize a storage closet
- Help a toddler learn to use the toilet

What steps are needed to complete this task?

What individual skills and strengths could you use to complete these steps?

How will you divide the steps? Who will do what?

What benefits might result from completing this task *together*, as opposed to doing it alone?

Note: Use with Activity 2–1

Handout 9: Building on a Family's Strengths

Instructions: Read the following vignette. Then discuss and respond to the questions on the next page. You will have 30 minutes to complete this task.

A Family with Many Strengths

The Casanova family includes Giselle and her children, three-and-a-half-year-old Nora and nine-month-old Alonzo, and Giselle's older cousin Alma and her daughter, six-year-old Lorna. The two adults and three children live in a two-bedroom apartment in a close-in suburb of a large city.

Nora attends the Head Start center, and Alonzo is enrolled in the Early Head Start home-based program. Alonzo was a low birth-weight baby. At his last well-baby checkup, the doctor said that his physical development is slightly below the norm for a child his age.

When Nora first came to Head Start, she spoke only Spanish. Now she communicates in English and Spanish. Alma and Giselle each care for their own children; however, they help each other out when one needs a break or has something to do.

Alma and Lorna were enrolled in Head Start from the time Lorna was a toddler until she went to kindergarten last year. Alma was very active in the program as a classroom volunteer and policy council member. She attended computer classes offered by the Family Service Center. Now that Lorna is in first grade, Alma works full-time as a computer operator. Giselle looks up to Alma and often asks for her parenting advice. Alma has lived in the United States since she was fourteen years old.

Before moving to the United States from Guatemala, Giselle completed the ninth grade and then worked in a factory for two years. During her first year in this country, she took English classes during the day and worked on an office cleaning crew in the evening. After Nora was born, Giselle stopped working and attending classes. She would like to go back to work, but she wants a different kind of job. Her favorite subjects in school were art and music.

Ernesto, the father of Nora and Alonzo, sees the children from time to time. He is in the Job Corps, learning to be a bricklayer. He lives in a Job Corps center, but comes home about once a month. He and Giselle are separated.

Ernesto's mother, Feliz, is close to Giselle and very involved in her grandchildren's lives. She recently retired after working for twenty years as a cook at an elementary school. Giselle says, *Nana Feliz has lots of energy*.

Note: Use with Activity 2–1

Handout 9: Building on a Family's Strengths (Continued)

1. How does each member of this family encourage the children's development?

2. How might the family's scheduled activities (work, caring for other children, school, training) affect their availability to regularly share information about the children?

3. How can Head Start staff take advantage of built-in daily, weekly, or monthly opportunities to communicate with this family?

4. Where could communication take place (for example, at the center, at the family's home, by telephone, or in another location)?

5. Based on the description of this family, what information might Head Start staff and the family share during the screening process and through ongoing assessment?

6. What information will the staff and the family need to plan and implement an individualized program?

7. What information might the staff and family collect and discuss through ongoing assessment?

8. In addition to Giselle, which family members could play a role in individualizing the Head Start program for these children? How could they be involved?

9. What else might the Head Start staff like to know about the adults and children in this family that would help them collaborate with the family to develop an individualized program?

Handout 10: Action Plan

Instructions: Select one step in *The Individualizing Cycle* and describe how you build partnerships between staff and families during this step. Next, plan strategies that you would like to try to improve your approach. You will have 20 minutes to complete this task.

Step in *The Individualizing Cycle*: _____

What We Do Now	Possible Improvements

Note: Use with Activity 2–1

Handout 10: Action Plan (Continued)

What We Do Now	Possible Improvements

Handout 11: Building a Strong Partnership

Instructions: Select a family with whom you have or had a strong and effective partnership. Answer the questions below. You may need to refer to the child and/or family's records. **Be sure to maintain confidentiality.** Complete this assignment before your next coaching session.

The Family

Who lives in the household?

What language(s) are used at home? How are they used?

How does each family member encourage the child's development?

How might the family's culture affect the child's development?

What are this family's strengths and how do they influence the child's development?

How do you show respect for cultural and language diversity?

Are there any barriers, such as school or work schedules, that make it difficult to maintain this partnership? If so, describe how you and the family overcame these challenges.

Initial Meeting

What happened when you first met this family?

Where did the meeting take place?

Note: Use with Activity 2–2

Handout 11: Building a Strong Partnership (Continued)

Initial Meeting (Continued)

Who was present?

What did the family members say and do?

How did you encourage them to build a partnership with Head Start staff?

What did you do to follow up on this initial meeting?

Step 1: Screening and Step 2: Evaluation (if applicable)

What information about the child's health, development, interests, culture, home language, and so on did the family provide?

How did family members participate in the screening process? What did you do to support their involvement?

Was the child referred for an evaluation? If so, how did the family participate?

Handout 11: Building a Strong Partnership (Continued)

Step 3: Planning for Individual Children

How is the family involved in using the program's curriculum to set goals for the child?

How is the family involved in developing individualized strategies for encouraging the child's growth and development?

How is the family involved in implementing the individualized strategies?

Step 4: Ongoing Assessment

What strategies do you and this family use to communicate and share information?

How often do you share information (for example: daily, weekly, during home visits, at conferences)?

How do you involve the family in reviewing the child's progress and planning for the future?

Handout 11: Building a Strong Partnership (Continued)

Benefits of the Partnership

How does the partnership benefit:

The Family?

The Child?

You and other Head Start staff?

Follow-Up

What did you learn from this partnership that you could use to build partnerships with other families?

Handout 12: Sharing Information about Each Child

Instructions: Your group was assigned to complete one of the two charts in this handout—either the one with information that **staff** can share with families (on this page) or the one with information that **families** can share with staff (on the next page). In the left column, list general categories of information about a child. In the right column, list specific examples of your own experiences for each category. Be prepared to share your entries with the full group. You will have 20 minutes to complete this task.

Information *Head Start Staff* Can Share with Families

General Categories	Specific Examples
Example: *Health status*	*I noticed Jocelyn pulling on her ear several times today.*

Note: Use with Activity 2–3

Handout 12: Sharing Information about Each Child (Continued)

Information *Families* Can Share with Head Start Staff

General Categories	Specific Examples
Example: *Family celebrations*	*Senekah's going to his great-grandfather's 100th birthday party.*

Handout 13: Using Shared Information

Instructions: Select an example of shared information from the completed chart assigned to your group. Discuss and record how to use this information to encourage the child's development. You will have 20 minutes to complete this task.

Information the Family Shared	How Head Start Staff Can Use the Information
Example: *I took Jocelyn to the mobile health clinic. She has another ear infection, so she'll be taking medicine for 10 days.*	*We will continue to observe Jocelyn to make sure the medicine is taking care of the problem.* *We will remember that Jocelyn has a history of ear infections and let her family know immediately whenever we see signs of a possible infection.* *We will check in with Jocelyn's family after their follow-up visit to the clinic.*

Note: Use with Activity 2-3

Handout 13: Using Shared Information (Continued)

Information Head Start Staff Shared	How the Family Can Use the Information
Example: *Senekah told us about his great-grandfather's birthday party. He said he's going to paint a picture for his Pop-Pop.*	*Senekah could help me arrange the pictures taken at the party in a special album.* *When we visit Pop-Pop at Jubilee House, the senior citizens' apartment complex where he lives, Senekah can deliver his painting in person.* *We can help Senekah draw a family tree.*

Handout 14: Putting Information to Use

Part I: What Was Shared?

Instructions: Think of a child and family with whom you work. Record a piece of information that the family shared with you during the past week. Describe when and how the information was shared. You will have 20 minutes to complete this task.

Example:

Child and Family: *Mr. and Mrs. Samak and their daughter Swati*

Information Shared	When and How
The physical therapist said Swati has gained better control and will soon use leg braces instead of a wheelchair.	*Mr. Samak pinned a note to Swati's backpack.*

Child and Family:

Information Shared	When and How

Note: Use with Activity 2–4

Handout 14: Putting Information to Use (Continued)

Part II: How Can I Use the Information?

Instructions: Describe how you used the information provided by this family to individualize the program.

Example: *I wrote to the Samaks (as usual, by pinning a note to Swati's backpack) saying that we are pleased with Swati's progress and have shared their message with our disabilities services coordinator. She will call the family to schedule a convenient time for us to meet with the physical therapist to discuss how to change the environment, materials, routines, and activities in response to Swati's progress. I also suggested discussing how to prepare Swati and the other children for the switch from a wheelchair to leg braces.*

Handout 15: Reaching Out to Share Information

Instructions: Think of a family with whom you seldom share information. During the next week, make a special effort to communicate with this family. If appropriate, ask other members of the Head Start team how they communicate with this family. Use this handout to summarize your plans and to describe what happened when you implemented them. Complete this assignment before your next coaching session.

Part I: Planning

Child and family:

Why you selected this child and family:

Family strengths and plans for building on them:

Potential barriers to communication and plans for overcoming them:

Strategies for improving your communication with this family:

Note: Use with Activity 2–4

Handout 15: Reaching Out to Share Information (Continued)

Part II: Implementing

Date	Information Shared: Who? How? What?	How Information Was Used to Individualize
Example: *Sept. 23*	*This morning I showed Mrs. T. a photograph of Kim in his stroller taken the day that we took a walk in the warm rain. Kim is smiling and holding his hands out to feel the raindrops.*	*I suggested taking Kim for walks in all kinds of weather because he enjoys the outdoors so much.*

Module 3

Individualizing Every Day—An Ongoing Dynamic Process

In this module, participants learn how to individualize all elements of their program's curriculum in response to children's individual characteristics.

Outcomes

As a result of completing this module, staff will be able to:

- Create indoor and outdoor environments that encourage the growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities
- Offer materials and equipment that reflect children's cultures, home languages, skills, needs, interests, and abilities; can be used in many different ways; and encourage growth and development through exploration, decision making, and self-expression
- Plan and carry out activities that support the development of children at different skill levels and encourage children to make choices and participate in their own unique ways
- Use an approach for carrying out routines that responds to the skills and needs of individual children
- Tailor interactions to match each child's needs for guidance, support, and encouragement

Key Concepts

- It is not necessary to provide a separate set of materials or plan one-on-one activities for each child to provide an individualized program.
- Strategies for supporting each child's development can be developed during the daily and weekly planning process and arise in response to *teachable moments*.
- To respond to each child's unique characteristics, Head Start staff and families can individualize the following elements of the curriculum:
  - Indoor and outdoor environments
  - Materials and equipment
  - Routines and transitions
  - Schedule
  - Activities
  - Interactions

Module 3

Background Information

Individualizing is an integral part of implementing a developmentally appropriate curriculum. It is an approach that Head Start staff and families can use throughout the early childhood years at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and/or during group socialization sessions. All elements of the program's curriculum can be individualized. Some examples follow.

Individualized Elements of a Child Development Program

An individualized *environment* allows all children, including those with disabilities, to:

- Move freely without bumping into objects or other people
- Choose and replace materials on their own
- Take part in activities that support development in all domains

Materials and equipment that support individualizing:

- Respond to a range of skills and interests
- Reflect and support children's cultures and home languages
- Offer challenges that are not too difficult or frustrating
- Encourage exploration and self-expression
- Can be used in different ways by various children
- Can be adapted for children with disabilities

Planned *activities* can support individualizing by allowing children to:

- Choose which materials to use
- Decide how they want to use the materials
- Take part at their own skill and ability levels
- Choose to participate or not to participate
- Express their own ideas and feelings

A *schedule* can support individualizing when it:

- Is flexible
- Responds to *teachable moments*
- Reflects children's needs and developmental stages

Routines and transitions can be individualized to:

- Encourage all children to participate at individual levels
- Support children who find routines and transitions stressful

Adult interactions with children should match each child's need for guidance, adaptations, support, and encouragement. It is important to observe children to learn when and how to interact with them in ways that foster growth and development.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices Support Individualizing

In most instances, individualizing takes place when staff and families use developmentally appropriate practices. For example, if a child seems ready to learn to ride a tricycle, staff and the family can work together to provide the tricycle and a place to ride it, offer encouragement, and build on the child's interests.

Many practices typically used by staff and families reflect an individualized approach. For example staff and families can:

- Provide materials such as blocks, pots and pans, and dress-up clothes that children can use in different ways and according to their abilities, interests, and skills
- Introduce new materials and activities in response to children's changing needs, interests, and skill levels
- Offer outdoor play opportunities in an environment that includes a variety of equipment and activity choices
- Plan small group activities that include built-in opportunities for children to decide how they want to participate
- Reflect the children's cultures and home languages in play materials, songs and stories, books and tapes, activities, labels, and signs
- Use a flexible approach to routines and transitions so that a child can eat when hungry or finish a painting before getting ready for the next activity
- Include large blocks of time in the daily schedule when children can decide what to do, what materials and equipment to use, and with whom to play
- Use positive guidance techniques that match a child's temperament and ability to use self-control
- Tailor the level of encouragement and support in response to each child's ability to handle frustration and challenges

Head Start staff and families probably use many of these practices and others that respond to each child as an individual. It is important to adapt the curriculum to fit the needs of each child, rather than expect young children to change so that they will fit the curriculum.

Module 3

Including Children with Disabilities

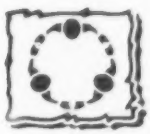
Head Start is committed to including children with disabilities in all aspects of the program. Staff work with families, the education coordinator, the disabilities services coordinator, the Local Education Agency (LEA) or early intervention program representative, specialists, and other consultants to make adjustments that allow children to learn in the least restrictive environment and to provide materials that encourage the child's development. Here are examples of accommodations to the environment, materials, and equipment that specialists such as occupational or physical therapists might recommend:

- Adjust tables so that wheelchair arms fit underneath. If tables are not adjustable, raise legs by placing blocks under them, shorten legs by sawing off pieces, or exchange tables with another group. If tables are raised, provide tall stools so that other children can also sit comfortably.
- Use bolsters, wedges, or platforms, indoors and outdoors, to increase the comfort of children with mobility impairments.
- Use puzzles with knobs for children with fine motor impairments.
- Use large-sized books and magnifying glasses for children with visual impairments.
- Place items on the floor or ground for children who are most comfortable at this level.
- Arrange the furniture and equipment so that there is sufficient space for a child to turn and maneuver a wheelchair or walk with crutches.
- Provide eating utensils with special grips and edges. Offer alternatives to water fountains (such as drinking water dispensers).
- Apply masking tape to brush handles and crayons or insert handles through a slit in a small rubber ball so that children can get a firm grip.
- Make a book of textured fabrics to provide tactile experiences.
- Adjust easel heights to accommodate all children.
- Provide a ramp leading from indoor to outdoor areas for children who use wheelchairs or who cannot easily use stairs.
- Provide computer adaptations such as voice-activated programs for children who have problems with manual dexterity.

- Install a visual system, such as flashing lights, that can be used to get the attention of a child who has a hearing impairment.
- Use containers mounted on legs and hand-held tools for gardening so that children with mobility impairments can plant, weed, and pick crops.

Specialists might also recommend specific accommodations related to the schedule, routines and transitions, and interactions with children. Such accommodations should be tailored to address the goals in a child's Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP).

Activity 3–1: Individualizing Every Day, in Every Way



Purpose: In this activity, participants plan strategies for individualizing all elements of a child development program.

Outcomes:

Participants create indoor and outdoor environments that encourage the growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

Participants offer materials and equipment that reflect children's cultures, home languages, skills, needs, interests, and abilities; can be used in many different ways; and encourage growth and development through exploration, decision making, and self-expression.

Participants plan and carry out activities that support the development of children at different skill levels and encourage them to make choices and participate in their own unique ways.

Participants use an approach to carrying out routines that responds to the skills and needs of individual children.

Participants tailor their interactions to match each child's need for guidance, support, and encouragement.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape

Option A:
VCR, monitor, and videotape *Individualizing in Head Start*

Option B:
Handout 16: Individualizing Every Day

Option A and Option B

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on the many ways they can individualize the program in response to children's unique characteristics.

2. Review the definition of individualizing presented in Module 1:

   Individualizing is the ongoing process of recognizing the unique characteristics of each child and planning a curriculum that responds to these differences.

   Note: The first part of this definition takes place during screening, evaluation, and ongoing assessment (Steps 1, 2, and 4 of *The Individualizing Cycle*). This activity focuses on the second part of the definition (Step 3), which involves using information about each child's unique characteristics to individualize all elements of the curriculum: environment, materials and equipment, routines and transitions, schedule, activities, and interactions.

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
>
> There are two options for completing Step 3. For Option A, use the 15-minute videotape *Individualizing in Head Start*. (See the Resources section of this guide for information on ordering a free copy of this videotape.) **Note:** The videotape for Option A also includes *Curriculum in Head Start* and has an accompanying *User's Guide*.
>
> Option B covers the same topics and skills without using the videotape.

Option A

3. Introduce the videotape *Individualizing in Head Start*, which was produced for Head Start. It presents the planned and spontaneous strategies that staff and families use to individualize the program for three children: five-year-old Geraldine, four-year-old Billy, and four-year-old Sabrina. Divide the participants into three groups and ask each group to focus attention on one of the children. While watching the videotape, participants can take notes about how to focus on a child's unique characteristics and how the staff and families use this information to individualize the curriculum.

   Have participants form small groups with others who focused on the same child. Ask the groups to discuss their notes, then list strategies they could use to individualize their program's curriculum. Allow the

group 20 minutes to complete this task. ***(Go to Step 4 to continue the activity.)***

Option B

3. Ask participants for examples of tasks related to children and families that they performed in their program during the past week. Record their responses on chart paper. The list of tasks might include:

   - Followed up on a home visit
   - Greeted children and families
   - Mixed paint and set up easels
   - Read a story to a toddler
   - Taught children how to do a fingerplay during group time
   - Comforted a crying baby
   - Helped toddlers put on their coats
   - Set up for a cooking activity
   - Listened while a child described her feelings
   - Talked to a parent about nutrition during a home visit

   Have participants form small groups. Distribute *Handout 16: Individualizing Every Day* and review the instructions and examples. Allow the groups 20 minutes to complete this task.

Options A and B

4. Write each of the following six elements of the curriculum at the top of a piece of chart paper:

   - Indoor and outdoor environments
   - Materials and equipment
   - Routines and transitions
   - Schedule
   - Activities
   - Interactions

   Post the six pieces of chart paper around the room. Provide markers next to each piece of paper. Ask the groups to record their individualizing strategies under the appropriate headings.

Trainer Preparation Notes:

The participants' individualizing strategies will vary according to the ages of the children with whom they work and the program option(s) implemented by their Head Start agency. Nevertheless, the key points in Step 5 apply to *The Individualizing Cycle* regardless of a child's age or the Head Start setting (home, center, FCC home, and/or group socialization session).

5. Review and discuss the individualizing strategies that participants recorded. Use the Background Information in this module to summarize. Also, cover the following key points:

   - You do not have to provide a separate set of materials or plan one-on-one activities for each child, including children with disabilities, to individualize the curriculum.
   - Staff and families can discuss strategies for individualizing during the regular daily, weekly, and monthly planning process.
   - Some strategies for individualizing, such as responding to a *teachable moment*, are spontaneous, rather than planned.
   - An individualized approach is appropriate throughout the early childhood years for infants, mobile infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, and especially for children with disabilities.

6. Ask participants to: (1) select an element of a child development program that they find difficult to individualize, and (2) choose a strategy that they think will help them improve their approach to individualizing. (They can choose one of the strategies listed on the chart for this program element.) Encourage participants to work with their colleagues to implement this strategy and assess its effectiveness.

Activity 3–2: Daily Approaches to Individualizing

Purpose: In this activity, participants use strategies for individualizing in response to children's unique characteristics.

Outcomes:

Participants create an indoor and outdoor environment that encourages the growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

Participants offer materials and equipment that reflect children's cultures, home languages, skills, needs, interests, and abilities; can be used in many different ways; and encourage growth and development through exploration, decision making, and self-expression.

Participants plan and carry out activities that support the development of children at different skill levels and encourage children to make choices and participate in their own unique ways.

Participants use an approach to carrying out routines that responds to the skills and needs of individual children.

Participants tailor their interactions to match each child's need for guidance, support, and encouragement.

Materials:
Chart paper, markers, tape

Option A:
VCR, monitor, and videotape *Individualizing in Head Start*
Handout 17: Strategies for Individualizing

Options A and B:
Handout 18: Individualizing Journal

Options A and B

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on individualizing the curriculum in response to children's unique characteristics and on reviewing the effectiveness of individualizing strategies for a specific child.

2. Review the definition of individualizing discussed in Module 1:

   Individualizing is the ongoing process of recognizing each child's unique characteristics and planning a curriculum that responds to these differences.

   Note: The first part of this definition takes place during screening, evaluation, and ongoing assessment (Steps 1, 2, and 4 of *The Individualizing Cycle*). This activity focuses on the second part of the definition (Step 3), which involves using information about each child's unique characteristics to individualize all elements of the curriculum: environment, materials and equipment, routines and transitions, schedule, activities, and interactions.

Coach Preparation Notes:

There are two options for completing Step 3. For Option A, use the 15-minute videotape *Individualizing in Head Start*. (See the Resources section of this guide for information on ordering a free copy of this videotape.) **Note:** The videotape for Option A also includes *Curriculum in Head Start* and has an accompanying *User's Guide*.

Option B covers the same topics and skills without using the videotape.

Option A

3. Introduce the videotape *Individualizing in Head Start*, which was produced for Head Start. It presents the planned and spontaneous strategies that staff and families use to individualize a program for three children: five-year-old Geraldine, four-year-old Billy, and four-year-old Sabrina. Participants can view the videotape individually or together.

   Distribute *Handout 17: Strategies for Individualizing* and review the instructions and examples. Give participants 30 minutes to complete this task. Discuss the participants' completed handouts. ***(Go to Step 4 to continue the activity.)***

Option B

3. Ask participants to think about a typical day as you discuss the following questions. Sample responses appear under each one.

   - *How did you adapt or rearrange the indoor or outdoor environment to respond to an individual child?*

     We made a crawling area out of pillows and blankets so Shantih would have a safe place to crawl.

   - *How did you address a child's unique characteristics through materials or equipment?*

     I showed Bernadine's mother how to make blocks out of paper bags stuffed with newspapers.

   - *What did you do to support a child's growth and development during a routine or transition?*

     I used the swaddling technique suggested by Roger's grandmother to comfort him and help him fall asleep.

   - *How did you adjust the schedule to respond to a child?*

     Erin was watching a lizard outside on the playground. We extended outdoor play time so she could continue her investigation.

   - *How did you plan and implement an activity designed to include one or more specific children?*

     I set up the woodworking area for the group socialization session because Antoinette and Preston have the small motor skills needed to use the tools.

- *How did you interact with a child to match his or her need for guidance or support?*

  We have observed that Carl sometimes gets frightened when he climbs too high and asks for help getting down. I stood near Carl while he climbed so I would be nearby if he needed help.

Coach Preparation Notes:

Participants' responses for Step 3 (Option A or B) will vary according to the ages of the children with whom they work and the program option(s) implemented by their Head Start agency. Nevertheless, the key points discussed in Step 4 apply to *The Individualizing Cycle* regardless of a child's age or the Head Start setting (home, center, FCC home, and/or group socialization session).

Options A and B

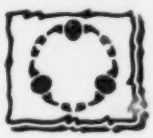
4. Use the Background Information in this module to discuss and summarize the many ways staff and families can individualize the curriculum. Cover the following additional key points:

   - You do not have to provide a separate set of materials or plan one-on-one activities for each child, including children with disabilities, to individualize the program.
   - Staff and families can plan strategies for individualizing during the regular daily, weekly, and monthly planning process.
   - Some strategies for individualizing, such as responding to a *teachable moment*, are spontaneous, rather than planned.
   - An individualized approach is appropriate throughout the early childhood years for infants, mobile infants, toddlers, and preschoolers, especially for children with disabilities.

5. Distribute *Handout 18: Individualizing Journal* and review the instructions and examples. Ask participants to complete their journals before the next coaching session.

6. Meet with participants to discuss the strategies they used to individualize the curriculum during the past week. Encourage them to discuss these and other individualizing strategies with children's families.

Activity 3–3: Something for Everyone



Purpose: In this activity, participants will learn how to use what they know about a child to individualize activities, indoor and outdoor environments, materials and equipment, routines and transitions, the schedule, and interactions.

Outcomes:

Participants create indoor and outdoor environments that encourage the growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

Participants offer materials and equipment that reflect children's cultures, home languages, skills, needs, interests, and abilities; can be used in many different ways; and encourage growth and development through exploration, decision making, and self-expression.

Participants plan and carry out activities that support the development of children at different skill levels and encourage children to make choices and participate in their own unique ways.

Participants use an approach to carrying out routines that responds to the skills and needs of individual children.

Participants tailor interactions to match each child's need for guidance, support, and encouragement.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
Assortment of art materials
Handout 19: Individualizing for Bernard

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
>
> You may want to invite staff and families to this workshop so that both groups can learn about and support individualizing.

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on how to individualize activities and other elements of the curriculum.

2. Ask participants to form small groups. Give each group an assortment of art materials (paper in different colors and textures, scissors, crayons, markers, colored pencils, glue sticks, tape, recycled junk). Have participants share the materials while working on individual or

group projects. Explain that this is an adult-choice activity (similar to child-choice). Allow participants 30 minutes to complete their projects.

3. Discuss how the different creations represent each person's unique characteristics. For example, one person might use two contrasting colors in a drawing, and another person might use every color. Ask the following questions to point out the similarities between the participants' experiences exploring and using materials and children's experiences:

   How did you decide what materials you wanted to use?

   How did you decide whether to work alone or with others?

   How did you choose the person(s) with whom you worked? Did someone choose you?

   How did the materials reflect and support your skills and interests? What materials would you have liked to have that were not available?

   Did anyone choose not to participate? Why did you make this choice?

   What practices were modeled in this activity that could be used to individualize for children? For example:

   - We could choose the materials we wanted to use.
   - We could choose not to participate.
   - There was a wide variety of materials.
   - We could choose who we wanted to work with.
   - We could decide how we wanted to use the materials.
   - We could apply our skills in different ways.

4. Briefly review the following curriculum elements as discussed in Activity 3-1:

   - Indoor and outdoor environments
   - Materials and equipment
   - Routines and transitions
   - Schedule
   - Interactions
   - Activities (discussed in Step 3)

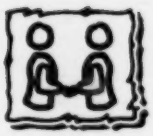
   Ask participants to form six small groups based on their interest in one of the curriculum elements. Distribute *Handout 19: Individualizing for Bernard* and review the instructions and examples. Give participants 30 minutes to complete this assignment.

5. Ask each small group to present its plans for Bernard. Discuss the characteristics each group addressed and how the planned strategies can encourage Bernard's growth and development.

   Arrange to copy the plans so that each participant has a complete set of the individualizing plans for Bernard.

6. Ask participants to share one thing they learned in the workshop that they can use immediately to improve their approach to individualizing.

Activity 3–4: Can You Make It Fit?



Purpose: In this activity, participants learn how to adapt an area of the environment in response to children's unique characteristics.

Outcomes:

Participants create indoor and outdoor environments that encourage the growth and development of all children, including children with disabilities.

Participants offer materials and equipment that reflect children's cultures, home languages, skills, needs, interests, and abilities; can be used in many different ways; and encourage growth and development through exploration, decision making, and self-expression.

Participants plan and carry out activities that support the development of children at different skill levels and encourage children to make choices and participate in their own unique ways.

Participants use an approach to carrying out routines that responds to the skills and needs of individual children.

Materials:

Handout 20: Is This Individualizing?
Handout 21: Is This Individualizing?—Possible Responses
Handout 22: Two Unique Individuals
Handout 23: Making the Environment Fit

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on what staff can do to individualize the environment in response to the unique characteristics of two children.

2. Ask participants to read the vignette on *Handout 20: Is This Individualizing?* Work with them to list the many reasons why the staff in this infant room are not offering an individualized program.

You can distribute and discuss *Handout 21: Is This Individualizing?*—Possible Responses if participants have difficulty responding to the story.

3. Distribute *Handout 22: Two Unique Individuals* and review the instructions. Have participants complete this assignment before the next coaching session.

4. Discuss participants' descriptions of two unique individuals. Distribute *Handout 23: Making the Environment Fit* and review the instructions and examples in Part I. Give participants 30 minutes to complete Part I.

5. Review the instructions for Part II of *Handout 23: Making the Environment Fit*. Explain to participants that they will use their summaries of the two children on *Handout 22: Two Unique Individuals* as they assess how well the area responds to each child's unique characteristics. Have participants complete this assignment before the next coaching session.

6. Meet with participants to compare and contrast how the selected area of the environment responds to the two children's unique characteristics and supports their development. Review participants' strategies for improving the area. Ask them to select several strategies to implement with the help of other Head Start staff and families.

Next Steps: Ideas to Extend Practice

Participants can build on the skills developed through this guide by completing the following activities, independently or with other staff. Some of these activities can contribute to the participants' professional portfolios. (See page 5 for a description of a professional portfolio.)

Plan for Routines and Transitions

Review the approach currently used for a routine or transition. For example, you might focus on what happens at naptime or departure. If this approach is not already a part of your written plan, include it in writing. Next, review the approach to see if and how it can be adapted to support individual children. For example, at naptime each child's cot could be set up in the same spot every day so that children gain a sense of security.

Possible Portfolio Entry: Plan for a routine or transition, showing how it supports individual children

Present Workshop on Understanding Temperament

Offer a workshop for staff and families on understanding children's temperament—the inborn characteristics that influence how they respond to the world. You can use Module 2 in the Head Start training guide *Promoting Mental Health*.

Possible Portfolio Entry: Ongoing observation recordings of children that focus on characteristics related to temperament

Handout 16: Individualizing Every Day

Instructions: List and discuss several examples of typical tasks, how you individualized them through *planning* or in response to a *teachable moment*, and how the strategies addressed children's unique characteristics. You will have 20 minutes to complete this task.

Typical Tasks	How Did You Individualize?	How Did It Address the Child's Unique Characteristics?
Example: *Mixed paint and set up easels*	*I put an easel on a tray in front of Viveca's wheelchair and provided paint in the colors she prefers and several brushes with shortened handles.* *I put two colors on one side of the easel and five colors on the other.* *I labeled the colors in English and French.*	*This allows Viveca to paint. She likes to use several colors. She can reach the easel using brushes with short handles.* *Some children use only a few colors; others mix them to create new ones.* *Several children are from Haiti. French is their home language.*

Note: Use with Activity 3–1 (Option B)

Handout 17: Strategies for Individualizing

Instructions: During or after viewing the videotape *Individualizing in Head Start*, record some examples of how the Head Start staff and families individualized the program for Geraldine, Billy, and Sabrina. Then list some strategies you use in your program to respond to each child as an individual. You will have 30 minutes to complete this task.

Planned or Spontaneous Individualizing Strategy	How Did It Address the Child's Unique Characteristics?
Geraldine	
Billy	
Sabrina	
Children in your program	

Note: Use with Activity 3–2 (Option A)

Handout 18: Individualizing Journal

Instructions: Use this form or make up one of your own and record the individualizing strategies you use during the next week. Make additional copies if needed. Complete your journal before your next coaching session.

What Did You Do?	Planned or Spontaneous?	How Did You Respond to the Child's Unique Characteristics?	How Did the Child Respond?
Example: *I provided two laundry baskets and beanbags for the older toddlers' group.*	*Spontaneous*	*Elijah is strong enough to throw the beanbags quite far and is very accurate. I moved one basket farther away to make the activity more challenging.*	*He moved a basket back and forth until it was just right.*

Note: Use with Activity 3–2 (Options A and B)

Handout 19: Individualizing for Bernard

Part I: You will have 30 minutes to complete Part I and Part II of this handout.

Meet Bernard . . .

Instructions: Read and discuss the following information about Bernard, a three-and-half-year-old who is enrolled in a Head Start program that combines home visiting with center sessions.

Bernard lives with his mother and father in a two-bedroom house next door to his paternal grandparents. His parents met in high school. His father works on a neighbor's dairy farm. His mother stays home with Bernard and his younger sister, ten-month-old Trixie. His grandmother and grandfather work at a factory in town. His mother's family is Ukrainian and Irish. His father's family is African-American. Bernard's parents think it's important to appreciate their family's diverse cultural backgrounds.

Some things Bernard *can do* are:

- ride a tricycle
- share, if he feels like it
- balance blocks
- wash his face and hands
- run
- answer simple questions
- set the table
- ask for help
- put on his shoes
- pull a wagon
- throw and catch a ball
- stick with a task, if he's interested
- do five- to seven-piece puzzles
- draw with markers and crayons
- classify by color or size
- pound, roll, and squeeze Play-Doh
- describe what he's doing
- tear paper

Some things Bernard *is learning to do* are:

- build a block tower
- wait for a turn
- sing songs
- skip and hop
- use props with Play-Doh
- button and zip
- pour juice without spilling
- turn the pages of a book
- classify by characteristics other than color or size
- cut with scissors

Sometimes Bernard:

- loses his temper
- hugs people he likes
- spills his juice
- falls when he's running
- feels sad when away from his home and family
- sucks his thumb
- has bathroom accidents
- alternates using his right and left hands
- cries when it's time to go inside
- grabs toys from other children

Bernard especially likes:

- feeding the chickens
- going to work with his father
- painting and drawing
- water play
- pushing big trucks in the sandbox
- being outdoors
- playing with his sister
- cooking and baking
- playing house
- stories about machines such as *The Little Engine That Could*

Note: Use with Activity 3–3

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Handout 19: Individualizing for Bernard (Continued)

Part II: Planning an Individualized Program for Bernard

Instructions: Use the following outline to design individualized strategies for the program element selected by your group.

Program Element: _____

What individualizing strategies can staff use at the *center*?	How do these strategies respond to Bernard's unique characteristics?
What individualizing strategies could the family use at *home*?	How do these strategies respond to Bernard's unique characteristics?
How could you individualize this program element for a child ***younger*** than Bernard?	
How could you individualize this program element for a child ***older*** than Bernard?	

Handout 20: Is This Individualizing?

Instructions: Read this vignette. Make a list of the practices used by these teachers that are *not* individualized.

A Slice of Life in the Infant Room

It's 11 a.m. in a well-equipped room where three adults and nine young and mobile infants are spending their day. Ms. L. looks at the schedule on the bulletin board beside the child-sized sink and sees that it's time for three of the children to do a planned activity. She goes to look for Charlotte, Brian, and Juanita.

Charlotte is having her diaper changed. *Walk her over to me as soon as you're finished. It's time for her creative activity,* says Ms. L. to Mrs. B., the designated diaper-changer for this week.

Brian is climbing on the couch. Ms. L. takes his hand and walks him to the activity area. She puts him in a low chair and attaches a tray. Brian cries and bangs on the tray. Ms. L. ignores his cries and goes in search of Juanita.

Ms. L. finds Juanita sitting on the floor, turning the pages in a cardboard book. *Moo, moo,* says Juanita. Ms. L. takes the book from Juanita, returns it to the shelf and walks her to the activity area. Like Brian, Juanita is placed in a low chair with an attached tray.

Meanwhile, Mrs. B. has put Charlotte in her chair, so now all three children are ready for their *creative activity*. Ms. L. wets three paper towels at the sink, puts a drop of soap on each, and gives one to each child.

Brian and Charlotte chew on their towels. Juanita wipes her hands, her face, and the tray. Brian and Charlotte follow Juanita's lead and wipe their trays, too. All three children fuss when Ms. L. takes their towels from them.

Next, Ms. L. opens a container of Play-Doh and places a small amount on each tray. The children pat and poke the Play-Doh while Ms. L. chats with Mrs. R., who is on the other side of the room feeding Richard, a young infant. They continue their conversation while Brian, Juanita, and Charlotte nibble on the Play-Doh and Richard drinks his bottle.

When Richard has finished with his bottle, Mrs. R. says, *Talk to you later. He needs to be changed now.* She turns him over to Mrs. B., saying, *Here's another customer.* Ms. L. looks at her watch and says to the children, *Creative activity time is over.* The children look confused as she takes their Play-Doh and returns it to the container.

Note: Use with Activity 3–4

Handout 21: Is This Individualizing?—*Possible Responses*

No, of course this is not individualizing! Here are some of the reasons why not:

1. One staff member does all the diapering for the week. Diapering is considered to be a chore rather than an opportunity to interact with each baby. Staff can get to know babies and meet their individual needs more effectively when each adult serves as the primary teacher for a few babies.

2. Staff repeatedly interrupt the children. Ms. L. removes them from what they are doing to participate in the planned activity. She takes the paper towels away before they are finished exploring their use. Ms. L. ends the activity because the schedule says it is time, rather than because the children are finished.

3. The children must participate in the activity because their names are on the schedule; they have no choice.

4. The handwashing routine is not tailored to match children's skills and is not sanitary because there is no running water. Only one child wipes her own hands. Also, because all three children can walk, they might be ready to stand at the child-sized sink and learn to wash their hands.

5. The staff do not talk to the children during activities or routines, such as feeding or diapering. Instead, they talk to each other.

6. The activity is exactly the same for each child. There is no variation in response to individual characteristics.

7. Ms. L. ignores the children while they use the Play-Doh. She provides no utensils, encouragement, or modeling.

Use with Activity 3–4

Handout 22: Two Unique Individuals

Instructions: Select two children you know well and summarize each child's unique characteristics on this handout. Use multiple sources of information (ongoing observation notes, conversations with families, screening results, work samples, photographs) to describe the children. **Be sure to maintain confidentiality.**

	Child #1	**Child #2**
Describe this child's family, culture, home language, and relationships with family members		
Some of the things this child **can do**		
Some of the things this child is **learning to do**		
Signs that indicate that this child may need adult assistance		
Activities this child especially likes		

Note: Use with Activity 3–4

Handout 23: Making the Environment Fit

Part I: Describe the Environment

Instructions: Select one area of the indoor or outdoor environment at the center or group socialization site. On a separate piece of paper, draw a sketch of this area that shows key features (for example, doors, windows, interest areas, trees, sandbox) and the arrangement of equipment and/or furniture. When finished, answer the questions that follow. You will have 30 minutes to complete this assignment.

Area of the Environment:

Example: *the outdoor sandbox*

What materials are available for children's use?

Example: *trucks; assorted props for digging, moving, and molding sand; natural materials such as pine cones and twigs*

What do children usually do in this area?

Example: *make roads for the trucks, make* cakes *and decorate them with twigs*

What problems typically arise in this area?

Example: *throwing sand, fighting over toys and props*

Note: Use with Activity 3–4

Handout 23: Making the Environment Fit (Continued)

Part II: Supporting Individuals

Instructions: Using the information about two children on *Handout 22: Two Unique Individuals*, consider how this area supports each child's development. Answer the following questions. Complete this assignment before your next coaching session.

	Child #1	Child #2
What does this child do in this area? What materials does he or she use? Does he or she play alone or with others?		
What materials could you add to enhance his or her use of the area?		
What planned activities could build on his or her experiences in this area?		
How could staff change their interactions to encourage the child's development in this area?		
What problems arise when he or she uses this area?		
What changes could you make in this area to address the problem behaviors?		

Responding to Children's Progress—The Ongoing Process Continues

In this module, participants learn about the purpose of and strategies for ongoing assessment. They also learn to use portfolios to maintain current information about a child's development and progress.

Outcomes

As a result of completing this module, staff will be able to:

- Implement an ongoing assessment system that documents each child's progress and changing characteristics in a portfolio that includes screening and ongoing assessment results, samples of the child's work, completed checklists, ongoing observation notes, family-provided information, photographs, and other data demonstrating the child's progress
- Select work samples that represent a child's skills and interests to be included in an individual portfolio
- Collaborate with families to review each child's progress, set new goals, and plan individualized strategies for encouraging development at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and/or during group socialization sessions

Key Concepts

- Children learn and develop continuously. To implement an individualized curriculum, staff and families need up-to-date information about a child's skills, needs, interests, and abilities.
- Portfolios record and document children's progress and changing characteristics; describe how they learn and develop social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills; pinpoint potential areas of need; and describe how life experiences may be affecting growth and development.
- Families can contribute to portfolios by providing samples of their child's work and their ongoing observation recordings of the child's changing characteristics and use of new skills in all domains.
- Staff-family conferences are opportunities to thoroughly examine a child's progress as documented in the portfolio, assess program effectiveness, set new goals, and plan strategies to encourage further development at home and in Head Start settings.

Module 4

Background Information

Through ongoing assessment, Step 4 in *The Individualizing Cycle*, staff and families collect information about the child's changing interests, needs, and progress toward meeting developmental goals. Head Start staff and families use strategies for ongoing assessment that range from ongoing observations to checklists to anecdotal reports to collections of children's work. Ongoing assessment documents each child's progress and identifies changing interests and needs. It provides up-to-date information about each child's unique characteristics, which is used to plan and implement an individualized curriculum. Ongoing assessment is built into the daily, weekly, and long-term planning process of an individualized child development program.

For many years, early childhood educators used standardized achievement and readiness tests to assess children's progress and determine their readiness for kindergarten. However, more recently, many early childhood professionals have determined that these testing methods do not provide sufficient, adequate information for measuring children's progress, in part because they do not reflect the ways in which young children learn. Standardized tests can be one part of the ongoing assessment process; however, they should be supplemented with other sources of information.

Portfolios

Many early childhood professionals now advocate the use of portfolios as a developmentally appropriate alternative to standardized tests for measuring young children's progress. Portfolios include information about a child that was collected from a number of sources such as ongoing observation recordings, screening and/or in-depth developmental assessments, and anecdotal records. They can include checklists, photographs, and summaries of conversations with families. Work samples—examples of children's work that were saved as records of the children's progress—are a major component of each child's portfolio.* See Appendix E for a list of work samples. These items record and document a child's progress through the curriculum and serve as a dynamic history of how children learn and develop social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language skills.

Portfolios also document interests, pinpoint potential areas of need, and describe how life experiences may be affecting the child's growth and development. Portfolios can demonstrate results of the individualized plans for children with disabilities. They are also the mainstay of ongoing assessment. Portfolios serve three major purposes.

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*P. Carini (1978) in Cathy Grace and Elizabeth Shores, et al., *The Portfolio and Its Use: Developmentally Appropriate Assessment of Young Children* (Little Rock, Ark.: Southern Association on Children under Six, 1992).

Portfolios Are Used to Share Information

Portfolios are a natural vehicle for *sharing information*. Agendas for staff-family conferences and home visits can originate in the profile of the child's ongoing development found in the portfolio. In addition, the portfolio may contain answers to questions raised at the conference. For example, Mr. and Mrs. F. want to know if Renée, who attends the infant-toddler center at a Head Start migrant program, will benefit from the materials and activities in the preschool classroom when the crops are in and the family moves upstream. Her portfolio includes a checklist assessment of skills, examples of scribbles that she wrote spontaneously, and a log of books Renée enjoyed at home and at the center. In addition, anecdotal observations and running records document Renée's growing motor skills, mastery of self-help skills, and her creative approach to problem solving. In fact, there are probably dozens of items in the portfolio about Renée's skills and interests.

Portfolios Are Used for Planning

Education staff and families can also use portfolios for *planning*. Because the portfolio is a dynamic record of a child's progress, it is an ongoing source of information that can be used for individualizing. Staff and families use screening and ongoing assessment information as the basis of their original plans for individualizing. They use information from portfolios to regularly update goals and plans for each child. In some instances, reviewing portfolios lead staff and families to identify signs that a child has a health and/or developmental problem that was not identified during the screening process. The child can then be referred for an evaluation so the problem can be diagnosed and addressed.

Portfolios Support Transition

Portfolios can be used for *supporting a child's transition* from Early Head Start to Head Start to another program or elementary school. With parental permission, the portfolio often accompanies the child to the new setting. This allows the child's new teachers and administrators to offer an appropriate curriculum. Portfolios that accurately represent a child's background, skills, interests, and needs will continue to inform staff and families long after the child has left Head Start.

Maintaining Confidentiality

When a program begins using portfolios, it is important to establish safeguards for ensuring confidentiality. As a rule, only persons with a *need to know* should have access to a child's portfolio. See Appendix E for additional guidelines for protecting the privacy of children and families.

Activity 4–1: Every Portfolio Tells a Story

Purpose: In this activity participants learn to use individual portfolios to conduct ongoing assessment, to document a child's progress, and to identify a child's changing needs and interests.

Outcomes:

Participants implement an ongoing assessment system that documents each child's progress and changing characteristics in a portfolio that includes screening and ongoing assessment results, samples of the child's work, completed checklists, ongoing observation notes, family-provided information, photographs, and other data demonstrating a child's progress.

Participants select work samples that represent a child's skills and interests to be included in the child's portfolio.

Participants collaborate with families to review each child's progress, set new goals, and plan individualized strategies for encouraging development at home, at the center, at an FCC home, and/or during group socialization sessions.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
A child's portfolio (if possible) without identifying information
Handout 24: Creating a Portfolio
Appendix E: Ongoing Assessment in Head Start

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on accomplishing ongoing assessment by maintaining individual portfolios that document each child's progress.

2. Ask participants to offer examples of how young children change. Their suggestions might include the following:

   - Grow (taller, larger, stronger)
   - Make developmental progress in all domains
   - Overcome fears and anxieties
   - Develop new fears and anxieties
   - Lose interest in one thing and become interested in another

- Respond to life experiences (a new home, birth of a sibling)
- Gain specific skills that are used in new activities (after a baby learns to crawl, she can explore the environment)

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
>
> If possible, use an actual portfolio in your discussion. Remove the child's name to protect confidentiality.

3. Distribute *Appendix E: Ongoing Assessment in Head Start*, and discuss questions 1 through 3. Reinforce the importance of monitoring and responding to children as they grow and change.

4. Introduce portfolios as an effective strategy for ongoing assessment: collecting, documenting, and reviewing information about a child's progress and changing characteristics. Review questions 4 and 5 in Appendix E.

   Explain that a portfolio is used to:

   - Record and document a child's progress
   - Describe how the child thinks and learns
   - Document social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills
   - Depict the child's interests
   - Involve the child in assessing his or her own work
   - Assess the effectiveness of current individualized practices
   - Set new goals for the child
   - Plan new ways to encourage the child's development

   Review the information about work samples in Appendix E (questions 6 through 11). Note that these are the heart of the portfolio because they are concrete representations of the child's interests, abilities, and accomplishments.

> **Trainer Preparation Notes:**
>
> In Head Start, portfolios are most often used to document the progress of preschool-age children. However, portfolios can also be used to maintain up-to-date information about infants and toddlers.

5. Ask participants to form four small groups. Distribute *Handout 24: Creating a Portfolio* and review the instructions. Give participants 30 minutes to complete this assignment.

6. Ask each group to work with another group to take turns discussing their completed handouts. Provide chart paper and markers. As one group presents the work samples they included in the child's portfolio, as described in Handout 24, members of the other group should record information about the child on the chart paper. For example, if Group A's portfolio includes a photograph of the child lacing his sneakers, Group B could record information about the child's small motor skills. If the work samples truly represent the child's interests and abilities, they should create a portrait of the child. Give participants 30 minutes to complete this sharing activity.

7. Reconvene as a full group. Ask participants to report on their results. To guide your discussion, include these questions:

   What did the work samples tell you about the child?

   In addition to the work samples, what other sources of information would round out the picture of this child?

   What information should be included in an infant's portfolio?

   What information should be included in a toddler's portfolio?

   What information should be included in a preschooler's portfolio?

   How can you involve families in collecting information to include in portfolios?

8. Ask participants to write down their greatest challenge in using portfolios for ongoing assessment. Have them form pairs to discuss each challenge and jointly develop solutions so that they can use portfolios for ongoing assessment in their program.

Activity 4–2: Putting the Pieces Together

Purpose: In this activity, participants develop a system for maintaining, updating, and using individual portfolios as a means for conducting ongoing assessment.

Outcomes:

Participants implement an ongoing assessment system that documents each child's progress and changing characteristics in a portfolio that includes screening and ongoing assessment results, samples of the

child's work, completed checklists, ongoing observation notes, family-provided information, photographs, and other data demonstrating the child's progress.

Participants select work samples that represent a child's skills and interests to be included in the child's portfolio.

Participants collaborate with families to review each child's progress, set new goals, and plan individualized strategies for encouraging development at home and in Head Start settings.

Materials:

Chart paper, markers, tape
A child's portfolio (if possible) without identifying information
Materials for organizing a portfolio (e.g., folders, labels, envelopes, index cards)
Handout 25: Getting to Know All about You
Appendix E: Ongoing Assessment in Head Start

Coach Preparation Notes:

In Head Start, portfolios are most often used to document the progress of preschool-age children. However, portfolios can also be used to maintain up-to-date information about infants and toddlers.

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on creating a *picture* of a child using up-to-date information collected from multiple sources. Participants will plan a system for maintaining and using portfolios. They will apply the system to create a child's portfolio.

2. Distribute *Appendix E: Ongoing Assessment in Head Start* and discuss the questions and answers about ongoing assessment, portfolios, and work samples.

3. Distribute *Handout 25: Getting to Know All about You* and review the instructions. Have participants complete this assignment before the next coaching session.

4. Meet with participants to discuss their experiences using multiple sources to collect up-to-date information about a child. Ask participants to use the information they collected to describe the child's characteristics, interests, and progress toward developing cognitive, language, social, physical, and emotional skills. If there

are gaps in the *picture* of the child, discuss what information is missing and how it can be collected. Encourage participants to seek information from the child's family.

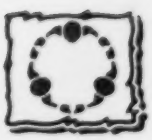
> **Coach Preparation Notes:**
>
> If possible, use an actual portfolio to demonstrate how the contents are organized. Remove the child's name to protect confidentiality.

5. For each participant, provide a container that can be used to create a portfolio and materials they can use to organize their collected information. The container should fit in whatever locked space is used to store confidential information. Ask participants to create a system for maintaining, updating, and using portfolios in their program. The system should include procedures for maintaining confidentiality. Next, participants should apply this system to organize the information they collected in Step 3 into a portfolio. Have the participants complete this assignment before the next coaching session.

6. Review participants' completed portfolio systems. Discuss the steps they need to take to begin using portfolios as their primary strategy for ongoing assessment.

7. Ask participants to share the portfolio created in this activity with the child's family.

Activity 4–3: Making Conferences Work for Everyone



Purpose: In this activity, participants will learn how to plan and hold conferences with families to review children's progress, set goals, and develop individualized strategies for encouraging learning and development.

Outcome:

Participants collaborate with families to review each child's progress, set new goals, and plan individualized strategies for encouraging development at home and in Head Start settings.

Materials:

Handout 26: What's Right? What's Wrong?
Handout 27: Conference Checklist

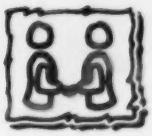
1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on how staff-family conferences can be opportunities to use the results of ongoing assessment to review a child's progress, set new goals, and develop new strategies for encouraging development.

2. Ask participants to form five small groups. Distribute *Handout 26: What's Right? What's Wrong?* and review the instructions. Assign a vignette on the handout to each group. Give participants 20 minutes to complete this assignment.

3. Ask groups to present their vignettes and share their responses to the questions *What's right?* and *What's wrong?* Use these presentations to describe the purposes of conferences and to list strategies for planning and holding staff-family conferences. After the group presentations, distribute *Handout 27: Conference Checklist*, which summarizes the key steps in planning and conducting conferences. (Tell participants to ignore the time limit in the instructions as it refers to Activity 4–4.)

4. Ask participants to compare their approach to planning and holding staff-family conferences to the suggestions in *Handout 27: Conference Checklist*. Ask participants to select an idea from the handout to try in their program and to explain to a partner why this idea will contribute to an individualized child development and education approach.

Activity 4–4: Using Conferences to Support Individualizing



Purpose: In this activity, participants plan, hold, and document staff-family conferences so they can jointly review a child's progress; assess the effectiveness of strategies used at home and in Head Start settings; set new goals; and develop strategies for continuing to encourage a child's development.

Outcome:

Participants collaborate with families to review each child's progress, set goals, and plan strategies for encouraging development at home and in Head Start settings.

Materials:

Handout 27: Conference Checklist

1. Explain to participants that this activity will focus on how staff-family conferences support individualizing. Participants will assess their current practices, and plan, hold, and evaluate a conference with a family.

2. Use the following questions to discuss staff-family conferences:

   Why is it important to hold staff-family conferences?
   How do they support individualizing?

3. Distribute *Handout 27: Conference Checklist* and review the instructions. Give participants 30 minutes to complete this checklist.

4. Discuss participants' completed checklists. Ask questions such as:

   Are there items on the checklist you don't do now but would like to do in the future?

   Are there items on the checklist you don't do now because you do not think they are necessary?

> **Coach Preparation Notes:**
>
> How you complete the next step will vary depending on the time of year you are using this guide. If you are using the guide at a time when conferences are normally held, you can proceed as described in Step 5 of this activity. If not, you may need to adapt the instructions to accommodate program operations. For example, if it is early in the program year, the conference might focus on collecting information about the child rather than on sharing information about the child's progress.

5. Have participants plan and hold a staff-family conference. Before each conference, use a blank copy of *Handout 27: Conference Checklist* to review the participants' plans and offer suggestions, if appropriate. During the conference, conduct an ongoing observation.

6. After each conference, meet with participants to discuss what you saw and heard, offer feedback on how they worked with the family to individualize the program for the child, and agree on strategies to implement in future conferences.

Next Steps: Ideas to Extend Practice

Participants can build on the skills developed through this guide by completing the following activities, independently or with other staff. Some of these activities can contribute to the participants' professional portfolios. (See page 5 for a description of a professional portfolio.)

Present a Workshop on Selecting Work Samples

Hold a workshop for participants and families on how to select work samples to include in a child's portfolio. Use the workshop as an opportunity to develop criteria that staff and families (and preschoolers) can apply as they decide which items truly represent a child's current skills and interests.

Possible Portfolio Entry: List of selection criteria for work samples

Develop a Handbook for Conducting Conferences

Develop a handbook on planning, holding, and documenting staff-family conferences. Describe your recommended practices and include planning and documentation forms. Provide examples that show how successful conferences contributed to an individualized child development and education approach. Offer suggestions for ensuring sensitivity to each family's culture and language.

Possible Portfolio Entry: The table of contents from the handbook

Create Lists of Age-Appropriate Portfolio Items

Invite parents and colleagues to help you create a list of items that would be appropriate to include in portfolios for children of the ages served by your program. For example, if you work in a migrant program serving infants and toddlers, your list would address those age groups. The items on your completed list should contribute to creating a picture of the child's changing characteristics and progress. Make a separate list for each age group served by your program. Disseminate draft copies of the lists to parents and staff and ask for feedback. After you have finalized the lists, share them with parents at enrollment or during the screening process.

Possible Portfolio Entry: Completed lists of items to include in portfolios for children of different ages

Handout 24: Creating a Portfolio

Instructions: Use the following categories to describe work samples you could include in a child's portfolio to document his or her interests, needs, and progress in all domains. The examples provided below will get you started. You will have 30 minutes to complete this assignment.

Samples of the child's work done at home or in a Head Start setting
Example: *Painting of the child and family*

Photographs of the child's work and accomplishments
Example: *Photograph of a block structure*

Photographs of the child engaged in everyday routines and activities
Example: *Photograph of the child lacing sneakers*

Written records
Example: *Summary of conversation held with the child after a visit from the Indian Health Service nurse*

Audiotape or videotape records
Example: *Videotape of the child and his grandmother taken when she came to the program to tell stories about tribal ancestors*

Note: Use with Activity 4–1

Handout 25: Getting to Know All about You

Instructions: Use multiple sources to collect up-to-date information about a child in your program. **To maintain confidentiality,** delete any references that identify the child. This worksheet will help you organize the information before bringing it to the next coaching session.

Background Information (provide the following information related to the child and family)

Age:

Ethnicity:

Home Language:

*Setting:

Family and Life Experiences (where and with whom the child lives, experiences that may affect growth and development)

Ongoing Observation Recordings (for each recording, note the time, date, observer, setting, and focus)

Screening and Evaluation Results

*Head Start setting (for example, home-based, center, Early Head Start, FCC home, and so on)

Note: Use with Activity 4–2

Handout 25: Getting to Know All about You (Continued)

Anecdotal Records (for each record, note the time, date, observer, and setting)

Summaries of Home Visits

Summaries of Conversations with Families

Developmental Checklists (e.g., summary of fine motor skills)

Samples of Child's Work (collected by families and staff)

Other Information (that helps to create an up-to-date picture of this child)

Handout 26: What's Right? What's Wrong?

Instructions: Read the vignette assigned to your group. Then discuss what's right and what's wrong in the approach to planning and holding conferences with families that is presented in the vignette.

1. The Families Didn't Come During the first week of January, Mr. G., a teacher in the toddler room, and Ms. P., a new home visitor, discuss the need to hold conferences with the children's families. He says, *We like to hold conferences at least twice a year so we can focus on each child without any interruptions or distractions. You see these people every week, so just give them these letters telling them when to come for their conferences.* Ms. P. delivers the letters; however, most families do not come for their conferences. Mr. G. tells his supervisor, *I work really hard with these children. Their families don't care what their children are doing at Head Start.*	**What's right?** **What's wrong?**
2. Thank Goodness Those Are Over At the end of each of this week's visits, Ms. B., a home visitor, tells the family that the next visit will focus on reviewing their child's progress. She says, *I know we talk about your child every week, but my supervisor says we have to fill out some special conference forms twice a year to get it all in writing.* Before the visits, Ms. B. records goals for each child. She thinks to herself, *This will really help me complete the forms quickly. Now I can use each home visit to do my real job—solving the families' problems.* After the visits, she tells a co-worker, *I'm glad I'm through with those conference forms. They took my attention away from the families.*	**What's right?** **What's wrong?**

Note: Use with Activity 4–3

Handout 26: What's Right? What's Wrong? (Continued)

3. They Didn't Have Any Questions Ms. N. and Ms. C. welcome the Nava family to the conference. Ms. N. begins, *We're so happy you could come. Let me tell you what Juanita is doing here at Head Start.* For 10 minutes Ms. N. enthusiastically describes Juanita's activities and accomplishments. When Ms. N. takes a break, Juanita's parents smile and get up to leave. Ms. N. says, *Don't you have any questions?* They continue smiling as they walk out the door. Ms. N. says to Ms. C., *I guess we told them everything they wanted to know.*	**What's right?** **What's wrong?**
4. We're the Experts Ms. C. and Ms. X, teachers in an infant room, spend a lot of time preparing for their upcoming conferences with families. They prepare detailed summaries of each child's development and compare them to the goals set earlier in the year. Ms. X says to her colleague, *This is a great opportunity to tell these families about all the wonderful things we're doing with their babies. We see so much of the children, their families probably don't even know all the things they can do. That's true,* says Ms. C. *We can let them know what they can do at home to reinforce our good work at the center.*	**What's right?** **What's wrong?**
5. Samuel and His Problems Ms. H., a teacher in a Migrant Head Start program, welcomes a family to a conference. She says, *I know you're moving soon, so I'm glad you came tonight to talk about Samuel's problems. His next teacher needs to know about the things he has difficulty doing so she can plan an appropriate curriculum.* Samuel's parents look dismayed as Ms. H. continues, *First of all, he never sits still. Then, he always . . .*	**What's right?** **What's wrong?**

Handout 27: Conference Checklist*

Instructions: Read the following statements. Do they describe the practices you use to plan and hold conferences with families? If so, mark the column labeled **Yes.** If not, mark the column labeled **No.** Use the **Comments** column to record your ideas. You will have 20 minutes to complete this task.

Although Head Start staff regularly share information about each child with his or her family, it is important to set times when you can focus on one child without distractions. Staff-family conferences can be scheduled at certain times of the year and as the need arises. These meetings are opportunities to examine the contents of portfolios, review the child's progress toward achieving developmental goals, review the effectiveness of strategies used at home and in Head Start settings, set new goals, and plan new strategies for encouraging the child's development.

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
Scheduling the Conference			
1. Explain to each family at enrollment how often conferences take place, their purpose, when and where they are held, and what is discussed.			
2. Ask the family what times would be convenient, offer several options, and provide lead time so the family can make arrangements.			
3. Ask the family to think about questions and issues about their child's interests, skills, and progress that they would like to discuss at the conference.			
4. If necessary, use a cultural or language interpreter or translated written communication.			

*Adapted from Diane T. Dodge, Derry Gosselin Koralek, and Peter J. Pizzolongo, *Caring for Children in Preschool Programs*, Volume II, Second Edition (Washington, D.C.: Teaching Strategies, 1997), 236–238.

Note: Use with Activities 4–3 and 4–4

Handout 27: Conference Checklist (Continued)

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
Planning the Conference			
5. Review and prepare a summary of the child's portfolio—ongoing observation recordings, anecdotal records, checklists, work samples.			
6. Organize the portfolio contents to make sure all areas of development—physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional—are covered.			
7. Discuss how to carry out the agenda, if two or more staff will participate.			
8. Contact a cultural or language interpreter, if needed, and discuss your plans.			
Beginning the Conference			
9. Anticipate at least 5 minutes of social conversation at the beginning of a conference. If appropriate, use a cultural or language mediator or interpreter.			
10. Explain to the family how the conference will proceed and stress that it is a time to share information, review progress, set goals, and plan new strategies.			
11. Begin with a positive statement about your relationship with the child.			
During the Conference			
12. Discuss all areas of the child's development; use portfolio examples as appropriate.			
13. Review goals set for the child at the last conference; use portfolio examples to show progress.			
14. Discuss the effectiveness of strategies used at home and in Head Start settings.			

Handout 27: Conference Checklist (Continued)

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
15. Discuss issues and concerns, new interests, and changing needs.			
16. Involve the cultural interpreter or mediator as appropriate.			
17. Set new goals for the child in all areas of development; make sure the goals are at an appropriate level—neither too advanced nor too easily achieved.			
18. Develop new strategies for encouraging the child's development at home and in Head Start settings.			
19. Ask open-ended questions to encourage families to share information and raise issues and concerns.			
20. Explain how you will use information that families provide so they will know the importance of their contributions.			
21. Listen carefully without interrupting or rushing the family member who is speaking.			
22. Restate a family's comments and suggestions to make sure you heard them correctly.			
23. Accept families' thoughts and feelings even if they are different from your own.			
24. Use factual, objective information when sharing information with families; avoid preaching, blaming, criticizing, and judging.			
25. Respect cultural preferences related to communication practices. Maintain an appropriate physical distance, eye contact, and tone of voice; respect response times to questions; use or avoid physical contact as appropriate.			

Handout 27: Conference Checklist (Continued)

Practices	Yes	No	Comments
26. Offer more than one suggestion when asked for advice about handling a specific situation and encourage families to work with you to develop effective strategies.			
Ending the Conference 27. Summarize your discussions; use the cultural mediator or interpreter as appropriate. 28. Note the follow-up actions each person has agreed to take. 29. Review the goals and strategies planned during the conference.			
Documenting the Conference 30. Take notes, with the family's permission, during the conference, especially when discussing a complex or difficult situation; explain to families that the notes will remind you to follow up on their concerns. 31. Complete a conference evaluation form by answering questions about what you did before, during, and at the close of the conference. 32. Document the new goals and strategies in the child's portfolio.			

Note: Review your responses on this checklist. Are there practices that you do not use now but would like to use? Are there practices you do not use because you believe they are unnecessary? Discuss the checklist with your Head Start colleagues.

Continuing Professional Development

Participants can undertake many activities to sustain and enhance the individualizing skills they develop through this guide. The following suggestions should be considered starting points.

CDA Program

The Child Development Associate (CDA) credential demonstrates competence in early childhood education. Administered by the Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, it is considered the standard credential for the early childhood field. To learn about CDA requirements, call the Council at 800–424–4310 or write the Council at 2460 Sixteenth Street, NW, Washington, DC 20009–3575.

College Courses

Many universities and community colleges offer courses in child development, human development, and child study—many include in-depth information on individualizing. You can take these courses independently (for credit or audit), for fulfilling requirements for the CDA, or for a degree. Courses can also be designed specifically for your Head Start program. To find out about course offerings or to request specific courses, contact the admissions, continuing education, or adult education departments of your local university or community college.

NBCDI

The National Black Child Development Institute (NBCDI) is a professional organization that advocates for black children. Its national membership addresses issues and policies that affect black children and their families. Its annual conference focuses on critical issues in child care, education, foster care and adoption, and health. NBCDI publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Black Child Advocate*. For further information, call NBCDI at 202–387–1281 or write to NBCDI at 1463 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Workshops/Training

In addition to workshops on individualizing offered at national and regional conferences, a wide range of training opportunities are available. For information, contact one of these organizations:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) at 202–232–8777 or 800–424–2460
- National Head Start Association (NHSA) at 703–739–0875

Most states have NAEYC and NHSA chapters that sponsor workshops throughout the year. If you have Internet access, visit the following World Wide Web (WWW) sites for information about workshops in your area.

- NAEYC: http://www.naeyc.org/naeyc/
- NHSA: http://www.nhsa.org/

Continuing Professional Development

Conduct Workshops

Participants who become invested in the value of individualizing may want to sponsor workshops on the topic. Taking a leadership role is one primary hallmark of strong and consistent professional development. Head Start staff could work through a community college, parent education program, or adult education program to offer a workshop on individualizing.

Resources

The works cited below have influenced the field's understanding of the individualizing cycle and provide the philosophical underpinnings of many of the activities in this guide. It is recommended that the trainer be familiar with their basic contents and recommend them to participants who need further information.

Anderson, Maria, and Paula F. Goldberg for the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC*TAS), Chapel Hill, N.C. *Cultural Competence in Screening and Assessment: Implications for Young Children with Special Needs Ages Birth through Five.* Minneapolis, Minn.: Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center, 1991.

This technical assistance paper is the fourth in a series on cultural diversity. It defines cultural competence and shows its impact during screening, evaluation, and service delivery through five examples. The paper ends with strategies for policy makers, parents, and professionals; questions related to the selection of instruments; and a comprehensive list of resources.

Beaty, Janice J. *Observing the Development of the Young Child.* Columbus, Ohio: Charles E. Merrill Publishing, 1986, revised 1990.

The author discusses six aspects of development—social, emotional, physical, cognitive, language, and creative—and describes the related characteristics of children ages two through six. A checklist of children's skills lists specific behaviors in each area.

Bredekamp, Sue, editor. *Reaching Potentials: Appropriate Curriculum and Assessment for Young Children.* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1992.

This volume presents the curriculum and assessment guidelines of the National Association for the Education of Young Children and discusses how to use recommended guidelines for screening and assessment and for curriculum planning. It describes strategies for reaching the potentials of children with special needs, minority children, and linguistically diverse children.

Bredekamp, Sue, and Carol Copple, editors. *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs Serving Children from Birth through Age 8: Revised Edition.* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1997.

This volume defines appropriate and inappropriate practice in settings for children from infancy through the primary grades. It discusses

professional consensus about the characteristics of quality care and education that support the development of each child's full potential.

Derman-Sparks, Louise, and the A.B.C. Task Force. *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for Empowering Young Children*, 3rd edition. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1989.

This resource, based on the findings of a task force of early childhood educators, helps adults understand how biases are unintentionally passed on to young children. It includes strategies for reducing, addressing, and eliminating biases in early childhood settings.

Gage, Jim, and Susan Workman. "Creating Family Support Systems: in Head Start and Beyond." *Young Children* 49 (November 1994): 74–77.

This article describes the use of the Family Strengths Model in Head Start programs. This model offers an approach that is sensitive to each family member and based on a trusting relationship between the family and Head Start staff.

Gonzalez-Mena, Janet. "Taking a Culturally Sensitive Approach in Infant-Toddler Programs." *Young Children* 47 (January 1992): 4–11.

This article presents an approach to respecting each family's culture while sharing the care of their very young child. The author's suggestions could be adapted for working with families whose children are preschoolers.

Gonzalez-Mena, Janet, and Dianne Eyer Widmeyer. *Infants, Toddlers, and Caregivers*. Palo Alto, Calif.: Mayfield Publishing, 1989.

This book highlights the importance of relationships between adults and infants and toddlers. An appendix demonstrates how the physical and social environment that adults provide contributes to children's development in the four domains.

Grace, Cathy, and Elizabeth F. Shores. *The Portfolio and Its Use: Developmentally Appropriate Assessment of Young Children*. Little Rock, Ark.: Southern Association on Children under Six, 1992.

This book discusses why portfolios are a developmentally appropriate method for assessing young children's progress. It defines the contents of a typical portfolio and explains how portfolios can be used for evaluation and for communication with families.

Hills, Tynette W., Lawrence J. Schweinhart, Samuel J. Meisels, John R. Bergmam, and Jason K. Feld. "Assessing Learning in Preschool and Primary Programs." ***Young Children*** **48 (July 1993): 20–47.**

This issue of *Young Children* includes four articles about assessment and its connection to planning an appropriate curriculum for young children. Each author discusses a different aspect of the topic.

Lee, Fong Yun. "Asian Parents as Partners." ***Young Children*** **50 (March 1995): 4–9.**

The author presents ideas and methods of working with Asian parents. The article is based on interviews with forty Asian parents, representing five Asian groups.

Mallory, Bruce L., and Rebecca S. New, editors. ***Diversity and Developmentally Appropriate Practices: Challenges for Early Childhood Education.*** **New York: Teacher's College Press, 1994.**

This book expands the current definition of developmentally appropriate practices to address the needs of young children with cultural and developmental differences. Contributors include Barbara T. Bowman, Carol Brunson Phillips, Douglas R. Powell, and Samuel J. Meisels.

McCormick, Linda, and Stephanie Feeney. "Modifying and Expanding Activities for Children with Disabilities." ***Young Children*** **50 (May 1995): 10–18.**

This articles outlines strategies for modifying and expanding curriculum activities so that they are individually appropriate for children with disabilities.

Meisels, Samuel J., and S. Atkins-Burnett. ***Developmental Screening in Early Childhood: A Guide,*** **4th edition. Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1994.**

This book is a guide to selecting an appropriate screening instrument. It includes sample forms and the National Association for the Education of Young Children position statement on standardized testing.

Phillips, Carol Brunson, editor. ***Essentials for Child Development Associates Working with Young Children.*** **Washington, D.C.: Council for Early Childhood Professional Recognition, 1991.**

This book has eight units based on the Child Development Associates Competency Standards. It contains information about what defines competent teachers of young children. It discusses the early childhood

profession, stages of child development, and preparation for assessment as a child development associate. The book contains NAEYC's Statement of Commitment and the Code of Ethical Conduct, as well as a list of members and resource information.

Stone, Jeannette Galambos. *Teacher-Parent Relationships.* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1987.

This book offers useful strategies for building relationships between child development program staff and families. The author describes how the relationship begins at enrollment and grows and changes during the child's period of participation. The author discusses how to handle common problems in ways that are acceptable to both staff and families.

Wolery, Mark, and Jan S. Wilbers, editors. *Including Children with Special Needs in Early Childhood Programs.* Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1994.

Each chapter in this book presents a different aspect of the issues and practices involved in including children with special needs in a child development program. Topics include working with families, assessments, environments, teaching strategies, and transitions.

Wolverton, E. Dollie, and Michele A. Plutro. "An Introduction to Developmental Screening in the Education Component." *National Head Start Bulletin* 43 (January/February 1993): 4, 13.

This article provides suggestions for child-centered screening and ongoing assessment that allow staff to focus on the child's individual abilities in relation to the sequence of development. The approach outlined is effective with preschoolers.

York, Stacy. *Roots and Wings: Affirming Culture in Early Childhood Programs.* St. Paul, Minn.: Redleaf Press, 1991.

This resource includes practical suggestions for implementing multicultural education. The author defines a conceptual framework for multicultural education and shows how it is tied to quality early childhood programming. She describes the stages children pass through as they become aware of differences and develop prejudices and discusses the effects of prejudice on young children from diverse cultures.

Head Start Publications

The following publications are available at no cost to all Head Start programs. Look for them in your program or center library. If your

program does not have these resources, ask your Head Start director to mail or fax a written request to the Head Start Publications Center. Be sure to include the Head Start grant number. Catalogs and order forms are available from:

Head Start Publications Center
P.O. Box 26417
Alexandria, VA 22313-0417
Fax: 703-683-5769

***As I Am* (1992)**

This curriculum and resource book encourages children's mental health. Suggested activities and experiences promote each child's self-awareness and growth toward independence.

***Head Start Home Visitor Handbook* (1992)**

This handbook offers guidance for implementing an individualized home-based program for Head Start children and families.

Head Start Training Guides

The National Training Contracts have produced a series of skill-based training guides. The Introduction of *Individualizing: A Plan for Success* mentions several Head Start guides that support its training activities.

Individualizing in Head Start and Curriculum in Head Start, A User's Guide to the Videotape Individualizing in Head Start and Curriculum in Head Start

The videotape, which provides both programs on a single cassette, and the accompanying guide depict families and staff getting to know individual children. It also includes ways for planning appropriate activities that respond to each child's unique characteristics.

***Responding to Children under Stress: A Skill-Based Training Guide for Classroom Teams* (1994)**

This staff development program provides trainer and participant materials for eight workshops that focus on a team approach to supporting children and families in environments with multiple stressors. The program suggests practical, individualized strategies staff can adapt to address individual circumstances.

The What? Why? and What's Next? of Individualizing*

Step	What?	Why?	What's Next?
1: Screening Developmental, Sensory, and Behavioral)	The process of examining each child's development (motor, language, social, cognitive, perceptual, and emotional), vision, hearing, and behavior	To learn about each child's skills, strengths, and needs and to ensure that health and/or developmental problems are detected and addressed as soon as possible	**No suspected problems:** 3: Planning for Individual Children **Suspected problems:** 2: Evaluation
2: Evaluation (Health, Developmental, Sensory, and/or Behavioral)	A comprehensive evaluation of a child's status conducted by health professionals and/or specialists that leads to diagnosis and services/treatment to address conditions and problems	To follow up on observed, known, or suspected health and/or developmental problems so the child can receive needed treatment and services	2A: Multidisciplinary Team Meeting
2A: Multi-disciplinary Team Meeting	A meeting of families, Head Start staff, the disabilities services coordinator, early intervention program/LEA representatives, and consultants, during which the team discusses the results of an evaluation	To determine whether the evaluation results indicate a child meets Head Start and/or early intervention program/LEA eligibility requirements for special education services	**Does not meet Head Start or early intervention program/ LEA eligibility requirements:** 3: Planning for Individual Children **Meets Head Start and early intervention program/LEA eligibility requirements:** 2B: Develop/implement IFSP/IEP **Meets Head Start eligibility requirements:** 3: Planning for Individual Children
2B: Develop/ Implement IFSP/IEP	A statement of strengths and needs of a child who meets LEA eligibility requirements for special education services; the provided services address the child's needs and build on strengths	To give families and staff written documentation of the strategies to be employed to meet the needs of a child with a disability	3: Planning for Individual Children
3: Planning for Individual Children	Staff and families use screening and evaluation results to set goals for each child and develop strategies for encouraging each child's growth and development	To offer a child development and education approach that responds to each child's culture, family, home language, life experiences, skills, needs, strengths, abilities, interests, temperament, and learning style	4: Ongoing Assessment
4: Ongoing Assessment	Staff and families collect information to document the child's current skills, interests, needs, and strengths	To review a child's progress, set new goals, revise or design new individualized strategies to encourage development, and make appropriate referrals when needed	2: Evaluation (when indicated) 3: Planning for Individual Children

*The terms used on this handout may differ from those used by your program. If necessary, ask your trainer to clarify each step.

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Appendix B

Ensuring Culturally Competent Practices*

Cultural Competency

Cultural competence refers to a program's ability to demonstrate respect for diverse cultural beliefs, communication styles, attitudes, and behaviors in all of its practices and interactions with children and families. Such a program has knowledge of the cultures of the families enrolled in the program, values and builds on cultural differences, adapts practices to meet diverse needs, and actively seeks new cultural information and skills to better respond to all families. Cultural competence is an important part of Head Start's individualized approach and is particularly important in conducting screening and evaluation.

Screening and Evaluation

Both screening and evaluation should rely on multiple sources of information to gain information about a child. One reason this is a recommended practice is that it is virtually impossible to develop screening and evaluation instruments that are completely nonbiased and appropriate for all children—regardless of home language and culture. It is not possible to use a single instrument to accurately measure the development of all children. Instead, staff and specialists need to use valid, reliable, nonbiased screening and evaluation practices.

Head Start staff and specialists must also be aware that biased screening and evaluation practices can lead to children being inappropriately diagnosed, labeled, and referred for special services. Inaccurate assessment may occur because there are biases in the screening and evaluation instruments and procedures used or because the person administering the instrument is unfamiliar with the child's culture and home language. Children may be overidentified as having special needs because their culture and home language differ from that of most children in the group. Lack of understanding of cultural and linguistic differences can also result in overlooking children who truly need services.

Cultural Mediators/ Interpreters

To be culturally competent, screening and evaluation must include families. Parents and other family members can share information about their culture and home language that may explain the child's apparent delay in development or lack of a particular skill.

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*Based in part on Maria Anderson and Paula F. Goldberg for the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System (NEC*TAS), *Cultural Competence in Screening and Assessment: Implications for Young Children with Special Needs Ages Birth through Five* (Minneapolis, Minn: Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center, 1991), 4–5 and 21–23.

Some programs ensure cultural competence in screening and evaluation by using language and cultural mediators or interpreters who assist the child and family and the person administering the test. These individuals, who are hired by the program, speak the child's language and often come from the same community. They tend to build trusting relationships with families more quickly than do individuals who do not share the family's language and culture. This leads to the family providing more detailed and useful information about their child, language, and culture.

Cultural mediators and interpreters need to be familiar with the screening and evaluation instruments and procedures, what information is collected through specific items, when they can change words, and when they must use specific terms. During the administration process, the mediator can present the actual test items to the child. In other cases, the mediator's role would be to convey information to the family members and present their responses to the person administering the test.

Role of Staff and Families

Head Start staff/FCC providers and families each play unique roles in ensuring the use of culturally competent practices in screening and evaluation and other steps in *The Individualizing Cycle*. Some examples follow.

Head Start staff/FCC providers can:

- **Value cultural and language differences as potential strengths.**

  Get to know the cultures and languages of families enrolled in the program. Find out what views and styles of interaction are associated with different cultures. Learn how families typically support their members, how they make decisions, what behaviors they encourage in children, typical goals they have for adults and children, and the role of religion or spirituality in daily lives.

  Review your own cultural background and experiences. Clarify your own cultural experiences, values, and biases. Think about how they might affect your interactions with people from other cultural groups.

  Expect differences among families from the same culture. Recognize families in a given culture may have different values, beliefs, practices, or goals for their children. Learn what languages the child understands and the situations in which the child uses them.

Accommodate each family's culture and home language. For example, if you cannot communicate in a family's home language, make sure someone with appropriate language skills is available to assist you. The interpreter should be someone who knows both the language and culture and will put the family at ease.

- **Respect all parents and actively seek their participation.**

  Build trusting relationships with parents. Invite and respond to their questions and acknowledge the information they provide about their child and family. Let families know how their active involvement helps you identify and respond to the child's unique characteristics.

  Provide a range of opportunities for parent participation. For example, one family might want to know how a formal screening instrument is used, but prefer to have education staff administer it. Another family might want to play an active role in the actual administration of the instrument.

  Identify bilingual and bicultural individuals who can establish ongoing communication with families. Families may feel more secure and be more involved in their child's program when they can talk with people they know and feel comfortable with.

- **Ensure that there are culturally competent screening and evaluation practices.**

  Use common sense. Adjust the program's procedures to meet the needs of all families. For example, if necessary, modify test items to ensure cultural competency.

  Conduct ongoing observations, administer instruments, and complete checklists in the most comfortable environment for the child. If a child is nervous or scared in an unfamiliar Head Start setting, get to know the child at home, at a relative's home, outdoors, or at a parent's workplace or training site.

  Be flexible. Schedule follow-up meetings to discuss test results with parents at times and in locations that are convenient for families. Provide child care for siblings or transportation to the meeting site or visit the family in their home or at their work site.

- **Continue to learn about and support cultural competence.**

  Participate in training to gain knowledge and skills in cultural competence. Apply the lessons learned in training throughout *The Individualizing Cycle*. Continue learning about cultural competence by talking regularly with parents, policy makers, professionals, and members of the cultural communities served by your program.

  Include representatives of the cultural communities served by your program on policy groups. Invite present and past parents and community members to act as decision makers.

Head Start parents can:

- **Make sure specialists conduct accurate evaluations.**

  Ask other parents to share information about their experiences. The first-hand experiences of parents whose children were referred to specialists for evaluations can help you learn what to expect. Find out about specialists who completed evaluations for children who share your culture and home language.

  Get to know specialists and their skills. Make sure they understand your culture and home language as well as techniques for evaluating young children. Ask them to describe how they will adapt the process to reflect your family's culture and language.

  Share information about your home language and culture. Sharing information helps specialists to be sensitive to your culture and home language. For example, a specialist might be concerned because a three-year-old's physical or language skills are below the norm for his or her age. A parent can explain, *Children in my community are often carried until age two. Many three-year-olds are just learning to run and climb.* Or, *My child was cared for by her grandmother until age two. She did not speak English until she started coming to Head Start.*

  Make sure your child's evaluation takes place in a familiar setting. Suggest settings in which your child feels most comfortable to ensure that accurate information is collected.

  Speak up when practices are not culturally appropriate. Your comments will help your child receive an unbiased evaluation. For example, *My child is not familiar with the toys you are using. Do you have any other toys he could use?* Or, *My daughter has never sat at a table to play. Could she sit on the floor instead?*

- **Advocate for your child to make sure he or she receives needed services.**

  Join a support group or network with other parents and specialists. This is a good way to get information now and in the future when your child leaves Head Start. Be sure to learn about those who provide follow-up services.

  Trust your feelings and instincts. You know best what does and does not work for your child and family. Express your feelings to staff and specialists.

  Find out your rights. Head Start staff can help you learn how to make sure your child receives a culturally competent screening, evaluation, if needed, and health and educational services for children with special needs.

- **Help Head Start program staff achieve cultural competence.**

  Ask your program to establish a cultural competence training program. Suggest making this an ongoing effort. If you and a staff member cannot communicate with each other, ask for help from a bilingual and bicultural interpreter or mediator.

  Ask your program to provide information in your home language. If possible, help translate forms and other communications or help the program by finding a skilled translator from your community.

Appendix B

Ensuring Culturally Sensitive Screening and Evaluation: A Questionnaire for Professionals

Review the Instrument

1. With what cultural group was this screening or evaluation instrument tool normed? Is it the same culture as that of the child I am serving?

2. Does the instrument have any cultural biases? Was it reviewed by members of the cultural group served?

3. After modifying or adapting a standardized instrument:

   Have I received input on the changes to be certain it is culturally appropriate?

   When interpreting and reporting screening and evaluation results, have I made clear reference that the instrument was modified and how?

4. When using a standardized or modified instrument, have I carefully scored and interpreted the results in consideration of cultural or linguistic variation?

Seek Community Input

5. Have representatives from the cultural community met to create guidelines for culturally competent screening and evaluation for children from that group?

6. Has information about child-rearing practices and typical child development been gathered and recorded for use by those serving the families?

7. What are the child-rearing practices of this cultural group? How do these practices affect child development?

Examine Personal Biases

8. What are my own values and biases regarding child-rearing practices and the kind of information gathered in the screening and evaluation process?

9. Can I use nondiscriminatory and culturally competent skills and practices in my work with children and families?

Ask for Family Input

10. How can I involve parents and other family members in gathering information for the screening and evaluation?

11. Who are the people with whom the child spends time? What is the level of acculturation of these individuals?

Build Professional Skills and Knowledge

12. Where can I get the specific cultural or linguistic information that I may need to be culturally competent in the screening and evaluation process?

13. Do I have bilingual or bicultural skills? If not, who can provide direct service or consultation as an interpreter or mediator? What skills should an interpreter or mediator have?

14. Have I participated in training on cultural competence in screening and evaluation?

15. Do I continue to develop my knowledge base through additional formal training and by spending time with community members to learn the cultural attributes specific to the community and families I serve?

16. Is there a network of peer and supervisory practitioners who are addressing these issues? How can I become a participating member?

Appendix C

Selecting a Developmental Screening Instrument*

Screening Instruments[1]

This chart summarizes the characteristics of screening instruments that are designed for use with children from birth through the preschool years. You can contact the publisher for a sample copy of the instrument and use the checklist on page C-3 as you review the instrument.

Instrument	Publisher	Ages	Categories	Administration
Ages and Stages Questionnaire	Paul Brookes Publishing, Co.	4 to 48 months	Communication Gross motor Fine motor Problem solving Social development	Parent-completed child monitoring system
Battelle Developmental Inventory Screening Test (part of the Battelle Developmental Inventory, a diagnostic evaluation tool)	DLM Teaching Resources	Birth to 8 years	Motor Communication Personal-social Adaptive Cognitive	Assessment methods include administration of test items to children, observation of a child in a natural context, and a parent report
Birth to Three Developmental Scale	DLM Teaching Resources	Birth to 36 months	Oral language Problem solving Social-personal Motor	Assessment takes place through observation or parent report
Brigance Early Preschool Screen	Curriculum Associates	2 to 2 ½ years		Directions are printed on two-sided easels for use as a reference during the screening process
Brigance Preschool Screen	Curriculum Associates	3 to 4 years		Directions are printed on two-sided easels for use as a reference during the screening process

*Tammy Mann and Stefanie Powers (1997). *Screening and Assessment for Head Start Programs Serving Infants and Toddlers*. Presentation at 24th National Head Start Association Training Conference, Boston, Mass.

[1]Review of instruments and accompanying documentation.

Appendix C

Instrument	Publisher	Ages	Categories	Administration
Denver Developmental Screening-II	Denver Developmental Materials, Inc.	2 weeks to 6 years	Gross motor Fine motor/adaptive Personal-social Language	Designed for use in clinical settings
Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning—Revised (DIAL-R)	American Guidance Services	2 to 6 years	Motor Concepts Language behaviors	Administered by a team of adults as children rotate through screening stations
Minnesota Child Development Inventory	Behavior Science Systems, Inc.	1 to 6 years	General Gross motor Fine motor Expressive language Comprehension-conceptual Situation comprehension Self-help Personal-social	Designed to supplement a parent interview when questions are raised regarding a child's possible developmental delays

Appendix C

Use this checklist to review developmental screening instruments. If the instrument is appropriate, you should be able to answer Yes to all of the following questions.*

	Yes	No
1. Is the instrument reliable and valid?		
2. Was the instrument normed (standardized) on young children who are similar in characteristics to those served in your Head Start program?		
3. Was the instrument normed for the age group of the children served by your program?		
4. Is the instrument compatible with the *Head Start Program Performance Standards?*		
5. Does the instrument reflect age-appropriate skills?		
6. Is the instrument child-centered and focused on individual skills?		
7. Does the instrument measure social, emotional, cognitive, and physical abilities?		
8. Is the instrument activity-focused (administrators can observe children performing tasks)?		
9. Can the instrument be administered in 15 to 20 minutes per child?		
10. Is the instrument free from cultural, ethnic, gender, and other biases?		
11. Is it relatively easy to learn how to administer the screening instrument?		
12. Is the screening instrument acceptable to the specialist who performs in-depth assessments for your program?		
13. Is the instrument available in the home languages of the children and families served by your program? If not, can it be adapted for use with children whose home language is not English?		
14. Does the instrument include a parent questionnaire? If not, can parents be involved in providing information about their children and/or administering the instrument?		

*Adapted from *A Guide for Education Coordinators in Head Start*, Resource Paper, IV, 18-19; and Samuel J. Meisells, *Developmental Screening in Early Childhood: A Guide*, Third Edition (Washington, D.C.: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 1989), 13-15.

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Appendix D

Characteristics of Strong Partnerships

In the left column are characteristics of strong partnerships. The examples on the right show how each characteristic can support a partnership between Head Start staff and families.

Choose to Belong

Mr. Bertrand, one of the more active fathers in our Head Start program for migrant families, said that he's glad the center is open one night a week. He and his wife work long hours during the picking season. They are eager to talk with staff about their baby, so they take advantage of the center's evening hours.

Respect Each Other

Quentin's mother asked me to keep him indoors all day because she thinks he might be coming down with a cold. I knew this would be difficult because we don't have enough staff to assign one person to stay indoors with one child while the rest of us walk to the playground. Instead of saying *No*, I talked with her and we came up with an acceptable compromise—I would make sure Quentin wore his coat, hat, and mittens and didn't run around so much that he got overheated.

Are Honest

During a home visit, I asked Mrs. Pritchett if she and Charles, her foster son, had enjoyed the activities that we planned in our last visit. She didn't answer right away. Then she said, *I'm just too busy. As soon as I think we're going to have time, something happens to upset Charles. It takes him a long time to regain control.* I responded, *Sometimes I find it hard to do all the things I plan, and I don't have the added challenge of caring for a child with emotional disabilities.* Then we talked about her schedule and picked some times when she and Charles might be able to do the activities.

Trust Each Other

Tiffany, a teenage mother, used to give us detailed instructions when she left her baby, Brandie, in our care. We could see that it was hard for her to leave Brandie, but she also wanted to finish high school. At pick-up time, we explained how we followed her instructions and told her about the things Brandie did while she was at school. When Tiffany got used to being apart from Brandie and knew she was safe in our care, her instructions became less detailed.

Each Makes Unique Contributions

Savannah seemed bored with the materials and activities we provided during last month's group socialization session. I asked her father what she liked to do at home. He said that she liked to help him make pancakes. He helped us plan a cooking activity for our next session.

Appendix D

Have Shared Goals

When I saw signs that Robert, a two-and-a-half-year-old, was ready to learn to use the toilet, I discussed them with his grandmother. She had seen similar signs. We discussed the approach we usually use at the center and the approach she had used to help her other children and grandchildren give up their diapers. We developed a plan we are both comfortable with and we agreed to talk daily to compare notes on how Robert is doing.

Divide Responsibilities

The speech therapist scheduled a meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Nugent to let them know that their son, Kent, a child with Down's syndrome, was responding well to the weekly sessions. I attended the meeting, too. We agreed on some strategies for helping Kent at home and at the center.

Everyone Benefits from the Partnership

Last week I bumped into a former Head Start parent at the grocery store. I asked how he and his daughter were doing. He said, *Marilyn's teacher says she's a good student and I'm in a pre-apprenticeship training program. When I'm through, I'll be hired to work on the Inter-Tribal Council's building project. Thanks for working with both of us when we were in Head Start.* I felt proud to hear that Head Start made a difference and was happy for Marilyn and her dad.

Appendix E

Ongoing Assessment in Head Start

1. What is ongoing assessment?

Ongoing assessment is Step 4 in *The Individualizing Cycle*. During this step, staff and families collect information about each child's changing interests and needs and progress toward meeting developmental goals.

***2. Why is ongoing assessment an important part of* The Individualizing Cycle?**

Ongoing assessment ensures that Head Start children are continually being observed and that their progress is documented. Staff and families need up-to-date information to individualize a child development program.

3. What strategies are used to collect information during ongoing assessment?

There are a number of strategies staff and families can use:

- Ongoing observation recordings
- Results of screening and/or evaluation
- Anecdotal records
- Summaries of home visits
- Notes from conversations with families
- Checklists
- Photographs of a child's work and accomplishments
- Samples of the child's work

4. What is a portfolio?

A portfolio is a collection of up-to-date information that documents a child's progress and changing characteristics. Teachers and home visitors are responsible for maintaining portfolios, and families participate in collecting items to include in them. Each portfolio includes information from a number of sources such as those listed above. These items provide a dynamic history of how children learn and develop social, emotional, physical, and cognitive skills.

5. How are portfolios used?

Portfolios serve several purposes. Head Start staff can use them:

- To share information with families
- As part of the planning process (reviewing progress, setting new goals, and developing new strategies)
- To support the child's transition from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start to another child development program or to elementary school

Appendix E

6. What are work samples?

Work samples are examples of children's work that are saved to record the children's progress. They are the heart of a child's portfolio. Here are some examples.*

- Samples of children's work completed at home and in Head Start settings:
  - Drawings, paintings, collages
  - Writing (from scribbles to numbers and letters)
  - Books dictated or illustrated by children
  - Computer printouts: art, writing, creative experiences
  - Graphs of science-related experiments
- Photographs of children's work and accomplishments:
  - Artwork
  - Cooking activities
  - Dramatic play activities
  - Block building
  - Accomplishments (sitting up, smiling, walking, eating solid food, rolling over, dressing self, climbing to top of a ladder)
- Photographs of children involved in everyday routines and activities:
  - Self-feeding (uses hands or spoon, drinks from a cup)
  - Collecting leaves on a nature walk
  - Performing personal care routines (brushes teeth)
  - Playing peek-a-boo
- Written records:
  - Questions, issues, and brainstorming notes from children's in-depth studies
  - Logs of books read with the child

*Based in part on Cathy Grace and Elizabeth Shores, et al., *The Portfolio and Its Use: Developmentally Appropriate Assessment of Young Children* (Little Rock, Ark.: Southern Association on Children under Six, 1992), 6; and *Portfolio of Developmental Progress: Celebration of Childhood Learning* (Department of Defense Dependent Schools—Germany, Early Childhood Task Force, 1994).

  - Notes and comments by children about their work, including descriptions of artwork recorded by adults directly onto drawings and paintings
  - Interviews with children about favorite play activities
  - Children's personal reactions to experiences (for example, a family picnic)
  - Children's self-evaluations of their work
- Audiovisual records:
  - Audio recordings
    - Children reciting stories they have made up
    - Infants babbling
    - Children making animal sounds, singing alone or with a group, or engaged in dramatic play
  - Video recordings
    - Children participating in everyday activities and routines
    - The stages of an in-depth study
    - Field trips or special events
    - Accomplishments, routines, and activities as described above

7. Who selects the work samples to include in a portfolio?

Staff, families, and children (beginning at about age three) can all play a role in selecting work samples to include in a portfolio. Families might contribute items such as drawings done at home or examples of skills they have observed the child using. Other members of the Head Start team can contribute their ongoing observations and information. Children can also help the adults select items to include. This allows children to make judgments about their work. In addition, children get the message at an early age that self-assessment is an important part of learning and growing. If children need help selecting samples, the adults can ask questions such as, *Which painting was the most fun to do?* or *Which books do you think you'd like us to read again?*

8. Which work samples should go into a portfolio?

It takes practice to become skilled in selecting examples that truly represent a child's work. It may help to remember that a portfolio is an ongoing record of a child's growing skills. Just as a standardized test tries to measure children's progress and mastery of skills, so too should the samples in a portfolio illustrate the child's progress and skills. If Desirée, for example, learns to make a block tower, this milestone is worthy of being included in her portfolio. Her portfolio would include an anecdotal record describing the accomplishment or a photo. In the same vein, if Amad habitually enjoys cooking in the housekeeping area, then this behavior represents his interests and play preferences. Ongoing observation notes of his play or an audiotape of him talking to other children about the meal he is cooking are appropriate additions to his portfolio.

To summarize, work samples should:

- Represent the child and reflect his or her progress
- Document growth in all areas of development: social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language
- Depict the child's participation in a variety of routines, activities, and experiences
- Demonstrate the child's involvement in indoor and outdoor experiences

9. How should portfolios be stored?

The containers used to house portfolios must be expandable, durable, accessible, and portable. Accordion files, donated pizza boxes, or plastic containers with lids serve this purpose well. Portfolios are confidential records and should be stored in an area that can be locked.

10. How should programs ensure confidentiality?

As a rule, only persons with a *need to know* should have access to a child's portfolio. To protect the privacy of children and families, you should:

- Use codes instead of names to identify portfolios and items that include personal information
- File items such as ongoing observation recordings and completed checklists immediately so they are not left out in public view

- Develop and use a form that states who can access a child's portfolio without prior written permission—for example, family members, teachers, home visitors, the FCC provider, the education coordinator, and specialists who provide services to the child
- Obtain written parental permission before sharing the portfolio with anyone other than the individuals designated on the form
- Store portfolios in locked files, drawers, or closets and limit the number of keys to these places
- Establish a policy on how long records will be kept on file (With parental permission, records such as portfolios are typically transferred to the elementary school when the child leaves Head Start.)

11. How often should portfolios be updated?

It is recommended that you add something to each child's portfolio every 2 weeks. To make updating a team effort, staff can share the responsibility and set a staggered schedule so they do not have to update all portfolios at one time. Date each entry to show when it was completed.

12. What categories are appropriate for maintaining portfolios?

Portfolios are growing collections of information about a child. To be useful, the information in them should be stored by category. For example, you might want to tie your categories to your program's curriculum, use the developmental domains, or select categories by program option or the child's age. The following example shows how to organize entries in a preschooler's portfolio by using activities as categories:*

- **Art** (fine motor development)—drawings, photographs of constructions, collages, writing samples
- **Movement** (gross motor development)—videotapes of movement activities, ongoing observations of outdoor play, interviews with the child about favorite games
- **Math and Science** (concept development)—photographs of the child measuring during a cooking activity, chart describing the child's activities while caring for plants, checklists covering use of creative thinking and problem-solving skills

*Based on Samuel J. Meisels and D. M. Steele, *The Early Childhood Portfolio Process* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1991).

Appendix E

- **Language and Emerging Literacy** (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)—tape recordings of the child telling stories, signs written by the child, stories or poems dictated by the child, list of the child's favorite books

- **Personal and Social Development** (self-concept, social skills, self-help skills)—ongoing observation recordings on social skills, chart showing choices made by the child, notes from talks with families

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